

BIRKENHEAD
AND ITS
SURROUNDINGS



HENRY KELSALL ASPINALL

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BIRKENHEAD AND ITS
SURROUNDINGS.



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BIRKENHEAD

AND

ITS SURROUNDINGS

*Topographical, Biographical, Autobiographical,
Anecdotal, and Whimsical*

BY
HENRY KELSALL ASPINALL.

“Forbear to deem the Chronicler unwise.”

LIVERPOOL
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“Affections lose their object; Time brings forth
No successors; and, lodged in memory,
If love exist no longer, it must die,—
Wanting accustomed food, must pass from earth,
Or never hope to reach a second birth.”

TO

LORD BRASSEY, THE HONOURABLE T. A. BRASSEY,
AND THOMAS H. JACKSON, ESQ.; ALSO TO THE
MEMORY OF THE LATE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER,
THE LATE THOMAS H. ISMAY, THE LATE WILLIAM
LAIRD, AND OTHER DEAR OLD FRIENDS WHO HAVE
PASSED AWAY, I DEDICATE THESE REMINISCENCES
OF MY NATIVE TOWN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

“A pen—to register ; a key—
That winds through secret wards
Are well assigned to Memory
By allegoric Bards.”

PREFACE.

EVER and anon for many years have I been urged by dear old friends to place on record the reminiscences of a long and a not uneventful life.

On this 8th day of June, 1902, (the fifty-fifth anniversary of my wedding day), I am at length induced to comply with the wishes so often expressed; and begin to jot down from memory the scenes of a storied past.

It is my purpose to compile a chatty, little volume reminiscent of my native town, and its progress from a small rural hamlet of a few score families to a thriving township of upwards of 100,000 souls. A connected history is in no sense attempted; chronological order is avoided; whilst matters purely statistical are rejected as foreign alike to the spirit and the intention of

the work. The book purports to contain nothing more or less than a series of anecdotes and events bearing on the general life of the community: Wirral hunting stories, scenes on the Mersey and the Dee, noted sailing and steam ships of the Mersey ports, incidents biographical and whimsical: all these, and much more, find a place.

As one of the oldest residents in Birkenhead, with a recollection stretching back for nearly three-quarters of a century (for fully a third of which time I took an active, not to say a prominent, part in township affairs), I may safely assert there are few now surviving who can cull from memory such a variety of events, social, domestic, and commercial, many of which, indeed, are known to the writer alone.

In the course of a long and a happy life, it has been my lot to play an active rather than a sedentary part. I am not a bookish man: this is my first attempt at authorship: faults in the manner there must be: wilful offence to any, there is none.

If my book give simple pleasure; if, to the old, it recall the scenes of bygone years; and,

to the young, make vivid the life and manners of a time outgrown; if, in some small measure, it keep green the memory of strong, brave souls and loving hearts that have passed behind the veil; if it do but these, my object is achieved, the labour I have undergone repaid.

Here I desire to place on record my indebtedness to my friend, John J. Buckland, for his invaluable assistance in revising MS., making Index, and seeing my book through the press.

HENRY K. ASPINALL.

43, HAMILTON SQUARE, BIRKENHEAD,

8th June, 1902.

Since going to press, my attention has been drawn to the following footnote in Mrs. Hilda Gamlin's '*Twixt Mersey and Dee* :—

"The descendants of Mr. Aspinall may certainly claim that their progenitors discovered Birkenhead, for, with the exception of the announcement of the marriage of Mr. James Aspinall at Birkenhead Chapel, in 1816, there is not a single allusion to the place in a whole year's issue of the Liverpool newspapers of that date. As we know, there were only 100 inhabitants, yet it is only eighty years ago."

Mrs. Gamlin was a friend and neighbour of mine; and called upon me from time to time during the preparation of her book for information, which I was always happy to supply.

H. K. A

July, 1903.

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IN the early 'twenties and 'thirties, hunting and racing were favourite sports with Liverpool merchants and shipowners. Among them were some exceptionally good men across country, while all thoroughly enjoyed the bracing atmo-

sphere of the field. They had a pack of hounds, the Liverpool Harriers, afterwards Lord Sefton's Harriers, with which they hunted the north Wirral country, making the Royal Hotel, Hoylake, kept by Mr. Parkin, their headquarters. For about a fortnight each season, this old inn was practically taken possession of by Liverpool hunting-men.

I well remember, as a boy, Mr. Parkin's showing me through his cellars, the most extensive in Wirral. He then told me he had had as many as six coaches and fours at his hotel at one time: the inn full of visitors; and the stables crowded with hunters and other horses: also that during the harrier season he sold over a pipe of port wine a week. Those were the days of the two bottle men; and a jolly set they were.

Hoylake, up to recent years, was quite a sporting and racing district. Village sports were held, when donkey and pony races proved an endless source of delight. Needless to say, there was no such evil as a betting ring; as these happy country gatherings were supported out of genuine pleasure, and the healthy British love of sport.

In 1824, my father, John Aspinall, was in

business in Liverpool, as were his father and grandfather before him. He was devoted to horses and hunting. The Liverpool Harriers he had hunted with from his youth ; but he preferred fox-hounds when within reach. About this time, the Wirral peninsula abounded with foxes ; so Sir Thomas Stanley, of Hooton, who had for some years kept a small pack of harriers hunting his own country two days a week, determined to keep fox-hounds. This was the immediate cause of my father's removing to the Cheshire side of the Mersey. He was one of the first gentlemen resident in Birkenhead.

On removing from Liverpool, my father took up his abode in a very pretty house near the river, on the site where Lairds' shipbuilding-yard now stands. Fronting the house, a large grass field sloped down to the river side. Here the Hooton fox-hounds met twice each season ; and the hunt breakfasted at my father's house. The men were a jolly lot, including the worthy baronet and his brother, Charles Stanley, of Denhall. Many county ladies graced the board. The huntsmen, whips, and other servants were suitably entertained in the kitchens and stable-

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yard. Quite a crowd followed the hounds when they "moved off" to the favourite draw, usually Gillbrook and spinneys—where the park is now—or Flaybrick and Bidston Hill gorse and woods, always a certain "find."

My father was well known and respected in the hundred of Wirral. Justly so. He was a thorough gentleman, hospitable and kind, a lover of sport, and an active participator in all local events, from the annual village donkey and pony races at Hoylake and Neston, to the more aristocratic meetings at Chester and Storeton. From *his* house the needy and deserving never went empty away.

He was a grand rider, and a fearless man across country, while his stables contained some of the finest hunters in Cheshire. Hearty and entertaining both as host and guest, his sayings and good stories were appreciated alike at the cover side and at the dinner-table.

It was well known that the venerable Rector King quietly destroyed the foxes at Woodchurch, near his rectory. One hunting morning, my father, my brother, and I were riding on the Woodchurch road to a meet at Thingwall, when we

met the rector in his gig. He and my father pulled up at the same time. "Good morning, Mr. Aspinall." "Good morning, rector." (He was always called either Parson King or Rector King.) "I am really sorry for you, rector." "Why, Mr. Aspinall?" "Because, rector, you will never go to heaven." "Why not, Mr. Aspinall?" "Because only Christians go to heaven; and no Christian ever shot a fox in a hunting country. The rector drove away without another word.

The rector's brother, George King, of Bebington Hall, also destroyed foxes. He lived near the Storeton covers, which belonged to Sir Thomas Stanley. One November day, the quarrymen made up a Guy Faux, and burnt the squire in effigy at the quarries. It was a very big bonfire, seen for miles around.

Storeton and Prenton covers and woods were well stocked with foxes in the old hunting days. In addition, Storeton literally swarmed with hares, and Prenton with pheasants. This was proof enough of the popularity of the Stanley family. All gone now! Wirral will never see their like again.

Squire Webster, of Upton Hall, near Wood-

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church, was a thorough sportsman and a preserver of foxes. He had near his residence many fine covers, and plantations with good lying for foxes. Upton Hall was a recognised meet; and breakfast was ready for anyone who chose to call.

Egerton Webster, the squire's son, was very fond of shooting, but never rode a horse. He was cross-grained in temper, and even worse. One day, the hounds found a fox in the gorse near the hall at the far end. The fox broke cover; and headed for Bidston. Egerton suddenly sprang from under a hedge and shot the fox dead almost in view of the hounds. The whole field instantly galloped up with the intention of horsewhipping Egerton, which he richly deserved, and would doubtless have half killed him for such a dastardly unsportsmanlike action; but my father, seeing who it was, rode forward and shouted to the field that it was the squire's son, and that he must not be touched. However, the indignation felt all round, made the village too hot for Egerton; so he left. Nobody was more grieved than the venerable squire over the cause.

A previous exploit of Egerton's was equally wanton. He was, without doubt, a wonderful

shot, and seldom or never without his gun. One day, from his father's lawn, he saw an Italian image-seller trudging quietly along the high road close to the entrance gates of the Hall. As usual, the wanderer carried the images on his head in a sort of pyramidal form. Egerton could not resist the temptation. Raising his gun, he fired. The crash was instantaneous; and the images flew into a thousand pieces. The itinerant was not hurt; but was so seriously alarmed that he bolted away with all speed, and was never heard of again. Doubtless, the poor fellow thought the old gentleman himself was on his track! It was such tricks as these that made Egerton so heartily disliked by the whole country side; and few regretted his disappearance from the scene.

There were no shops in early Birkenhead.

I remember, as a little boy, my mother used to go to Liverpool to do her shopping; and she sometimes took us children with her to have our hair cut by old Rennie, the hairdresser, in Lord Street; also to Galt's to have lunch, where the confectionery was always a great treat. I recollect my being sent to the ferry to say mother

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would be down in a few minutes, would they please detain the boat for her ; which they did. A small bell rang every half-hour to indicate that the boat was about to start.

My mother was one of the best of women, kind and amiable to a degree. Indeed, I never saw her the least ruffled in temper. She was deservedly beloved, not only in the family circle, but also throughout the neighbourhood. She was known as the "Duchess of Birkenhead." The allusion first appeared in a doggerel rhyme, published in a funny old Liverpool paper, called *Paddy Kelly's Budget*, which had a weekly issue, with a large circulation for those days—

"There is a Duchess in Birkenhead,
A shipowner's wife is she ;
Whose ships are known to be as good
As any that plow the sea."

My mother's charitable works were much appreciated in the district. She it was who established the first Ladies' Provident Society in Birkenhead. My father ably seconded her efforts by founding the first dispensary, which afterwards developed into a hospital as the population of Birkenhead increased.

CHAPTER II.

The Great Gale of 7th January, 1839—The Dead Donkey—The North - West Lightship blown from her Moorings — The *Cambridge*—The Mersey in the Height of the Storm—The *St. Andrew*, the *Lockwoods*, and the *Pennsylvania* wrecked on the Burbo and West Hoyle Banks—Great Loss of Life—A Pitiful Spectacle—Ships which were “Built by the Mile”—My First School—Henry Harrison—My Accident—My Father’s Consolation.

ON the 7th January, 1839, the Mersey and the Irish Sea were visited by the worst and most awful gale on record ever experienced from the north-west. I well remember being carried out of my bed early in the morning. The chimney had been blown down; and I was smothered and all but choked with soot and mortar dust. Several houses were blown down in Birkenhead and Liverpool; but the most notable incident on shore was the destruction of a large old barn, formerly in a farmyard, near the Priory, a short distance from my father’s house. Latterly, it had been partially converted

into a livery stable, kept by Robert Watts, for hunters and hacks. I went to see the place in the height of the gale ; and well remember seeing a dead donkey in the ruins. It was the first and the only one I ever saw ; and I venture to assert that few people can say they ever did see a dead donkey.

The Mersey was a sight never to be forgotten. It was a spring tide ; and the waves washed completely over the George's Dock basin up to the old churchyard wall. Ferry traffic stopped. There were in those days no landing-stages or bridges, and the Baths pier was under water. The small Welsh steamer, the *Emerald Isle*, painted green, drifted alongside the wall and was smashed to pieces and sunk : the old floating bath, moored off the south end of the Princes Dock, was sunk : the north-west lightship broke from her moorings, and ran into the river under bare poles. The American packet-ship, the *Cambridge*, a beautiful sailing vessel, bound for New York, was anchored in mid-stream between Woodside Ferry and Liverpool, with two anchors out. Her position was dangerous. A large board was

hung over the vessel's side bearing the following written in chalk in large letters, "£1000 to any vessel that will tow us into shelter." Later on, this was raised to £3000, but to no purpose. I saw this board and shall never forget it. At that time, there were but few tugs, and those not very powerful. The *Cambridge* rode out the gale in safety. For many years she traded successfully between New York and Liverpool. She was handsomely fitted up for passengers; and was the last vessel that sighted and spoke the steamship *President* in 1841.

On the 6th January, 1839, the day was fine; and a fair wind blew for outward-bound ships. Many left the Mersey under sail. The *St. Andrew*, the *Lockwoods*, and the *Pennsylvania*, first-class packet-ships, sailed together, all loaded with valuable cargoes and emigrants, together with a few saloon passengers for New York. Flags were flying, and the passengers full of bright anticipations for the future. Many of the emigrants came from the Continent, though natives of the British Isles predominated. Within thirty-six hours most of these poor people were drowned, almost within speaking

distance of land. On the morning of the 7th, the barometer fell to a very low point. The vessels had almost reached Holyhead, when suddenly the wind changed to the north-west and blew a hurricane. The three vessels at once put back for the Mersey, the only shelter in such a gale. Unfortunately, the wind veered dead north-west, and took the three vessels on to the Burbo and West Hoyle Banks. There is little doubt that the accident to the north-west lightship was to some extent the cause of the wrecks, its absence naturally upsetting the captains' calculations as to the right channel. The sea rose to a fearful height; and the vessels settled in the sand until they were literally smashed to pieces. No boats could live. The moment they reached the water they were swamped; and all on board were washed away. Several lifeboats put out; but the wind and the sea prevented their reaching the unfortunate ships. The Liverpool lifeboat, towed by the *Victoria*, the only tug powerful enough to face the gale, after several hours' hard steaming reached the vessels and saved a number of lives. Many were drowned, and washed ashore

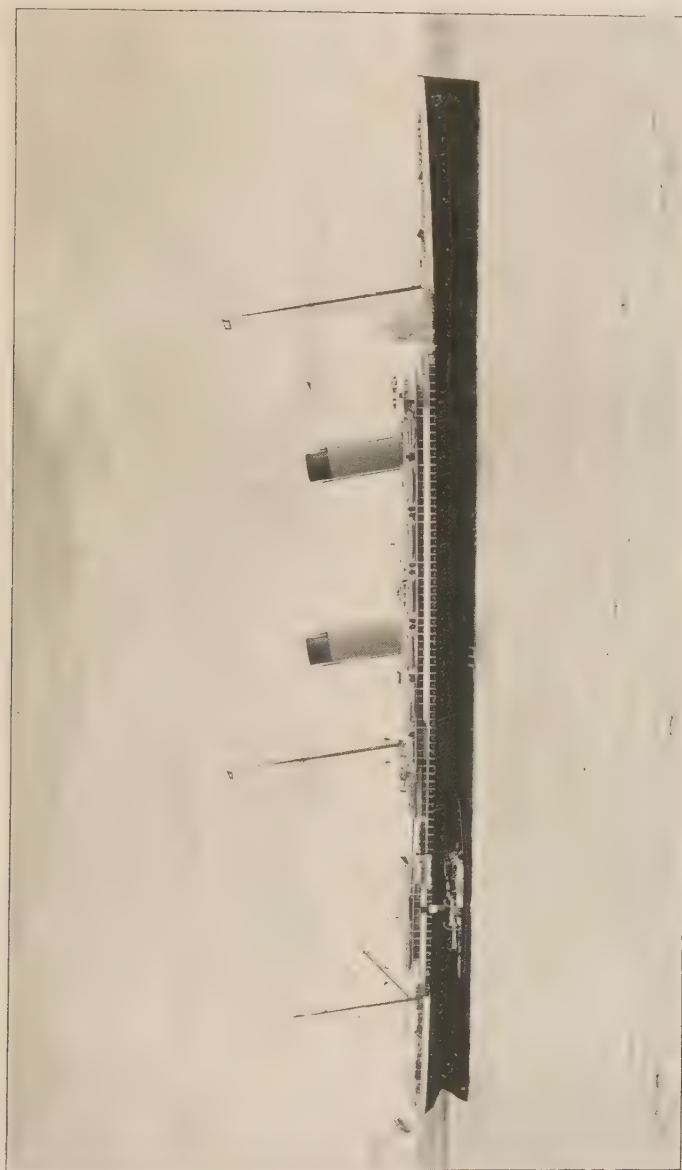
at Leasowe, Hoylake, and the neighbouring coast. I rode along the shore on one of my father's horses to Leasowe Castle, then an hotel, kept by Louis Bussard. I was only fifteen. Such a sight I never saw before or since, nor should I like to. The scene deeply impressed me. The beach was covered with wreckage and dead bodies. I vividly recall the latter—men, women, and children—and the clothes they wore. It was, indeed, a most pitiful sight.

Few have any idea of the magnificent fittings and decorations of the early packet-ships. The saloons and the staterooms were most tastefully arranged; rosewood and satinwood were blended elegantly together; while massive glass and ebony handles embellished the doors. Indeed, our splendid modern steamships, although more conveniently fitted and arranged, do not excel in taste that displayed by the American naval architects and builders of sixty years ago. To this day, in old Hoylake cottages, may be seen cupboards, doors, satinwood fittings, and glass and ebony door handles, washed up and appropriated by the finders—

sad relics of a catastrophe which caused a great sensation in the district.

About the time that sailing packet-ships were in vogue, mostly built in New York, there was an extraordinary type of vessel of large tonnage built at some of the North American ports. These, it was said, were "built by the mile": cut off when wanted; and sent over here for sale. Some of them turned out profitable enough. They were largely dealt in by Edward Oliver, who was for some years engaged in the business of ship importing. How people would stare if one of these old vessels could by any means be anchored in mid-river some night, side by side, say, with the *Oceanic*!

When seven years old, I was sent to a small school, conducted by an accomplished lady in Brandon Street, where the Birkenhead Town Hall now is. My friend, Henry Harrison, was my first schoolfellow. One day, we were playing in the garden, when we suddenly made up our minds to go across the street to some foundations which had been commenced for the purpose of building Hamilton Square. The work had been delayed for some time, owing



THE ATLANTIC LINER *OCEANIC*, 1900.—*Page 14.*

to lack of funds ; so the excavations had filled up to a considerable depth with water. Here we amused ourselves by making a raft out of the planks lying about. Good fun we had, too, until I suddenly fell off the raft into deep water. I was all but drowned, when a big boy luckily came on the scene, and pulled me out unconscious. The schoolmistress was very angry ; and had I not already been sufficiently punished, a stout birch-rod would doubtless have shown me the folly of my ways. I was always fond of the water ; and from time to time have had many narrow escapes from drowning, for I never thought of danger. A friend of my father's told him I would certainly be drowned one day. My father's reply was characteristic. "Oh, no !" he said, "a fellow that is born to be hanged will never be drowned." This was poor consolation for my dear mother, who was very nervous, and in constant dread of a serious accident. However, nearly fourscore years have passed away ; and I have been neither hanged nor drowned. I have been pretty well knocked about from pillar to post, but still survive.

CHAPTER III.

Ivy Bank, Birkenhead—Michael Humble and my Father—The Liverpool Rowing Club—The Delightful River Mersey—The *Great Liverpool*—The Crusader Rowing Club—How we won the Marquis of Westminster's Cup—A Strenuous Boat-Race on the Dee—Fatal Boating Accident on the Mersey—The Mersey of Sixty Years Ago, and To-day.

IVY BANK was an exceedingly pretty villa, built in Birkenhead's early days by Michael Humble (Humble & Mylchreest), shipbuilder, Liverpool, soon after my father came to Birkenhead. Mr. Humble was an intimate friend of my father's; and visited us frequently. He was fond of yachting, shooting, and dogs. His house was built on the river side, with river wall and iron railings, gates opening on to the shore, good stabling, and gardens. Wild rabbits in his fields and grounds abounded. He was for many years a bachelor; and he and his sisters and brother were very kind to us children. Late in life, he married a daughter of Thomas Tobin.

I well remember the Humbles had two very large mastiff dogs, which sometimes prowled about and rather frightened us, although they were good tempered enough, as most of this breed are.

Mr. Humble used to have his yacht moored opposite his house during the summer season; and he often took us for sails. He was stroke oar of the Liverpool Rowing Club, which he founded. Frequent regattas in connection with this club were held on the river; and spectators were admitted to our field, and to Mr. Humble's grounds. Numbers came from Liverpool.

The dear old river looked delightful. In those days the Mersey was very different from now. There were no large steamers, and few small ones, to disturb the water, while the walls and piers on the Liverpool side were of little extent. Boating was then safe; now it is dangerous.

When Monks' Ferry was opened, Ivy Bank was pulled down, and the Monks' Ferry Hotel built on its site. This, in turn, has since given place to Lairds' sawmill.

Michael Humble built a large steamer, called the *Great Liverpool*, which was engaged in

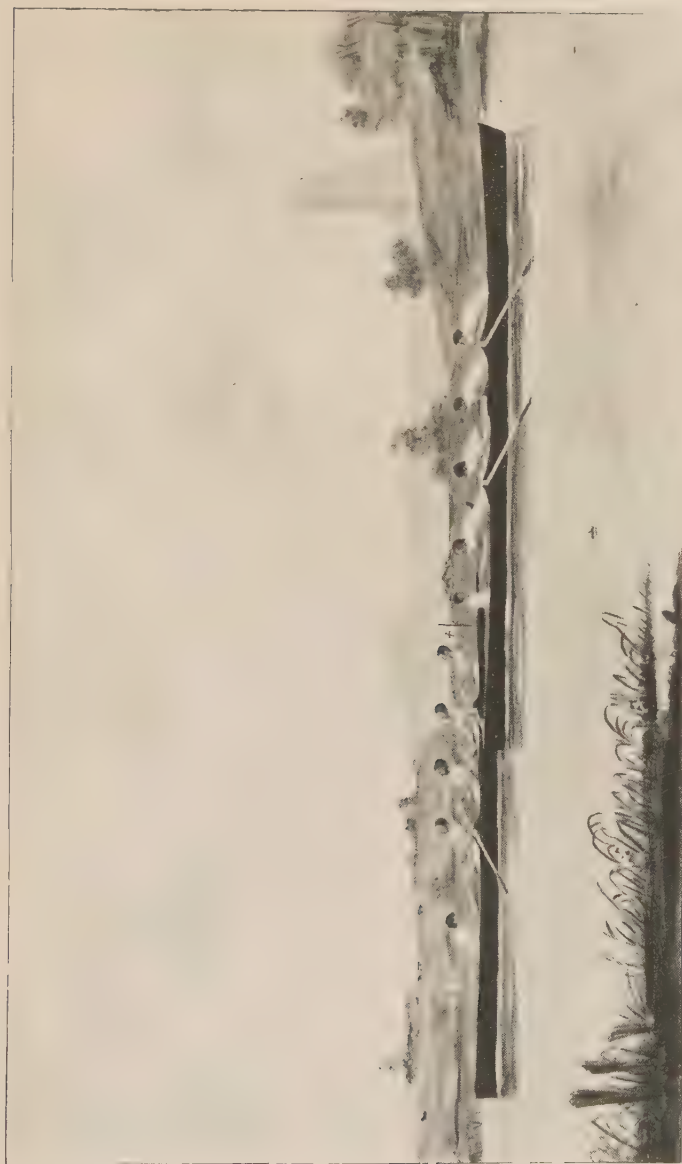
foreign trade. He hunted for many years with Sir Watkin Wynne's hounds; lived to a good old age; and latterly resided at Gwyselt, near Wrexham, where he died.

In the 'forties, I was coxswain of the Crusader Rowing Club, a most successful Mersey boating undertaking. Our headquarters were at Monks' Ferry. Aspinall Tobin pulled a crack stroke oar. He was a man of splendid physique, and a most powerful oarsman. Then there was Will Eaton, a fine second stroke. These, with Arthur Crook and G. Burgoyne as bows, and me as coxswain, made up a crew hard to beat.

We won several races, notably Chester and Dublin. The struggle on the Dee was very severe. Our boat, the *Crusader*, built in Dublin, was nearly forty feet long, very heavy, no sheer, perfectly flat in the floor, and thickly coated with vermilion paint in and out. There were no outriggers in those days. The race was for a gold cup, value one hundred guineas, given in 1840 by the Marquis of Westminster, to be rowed for by Chester clubs only. However, the Chester men were very strong; and, feeling confident they could not be beaten on their own river, they

threw open the race to all comers. The course was two miles out from the Groves, round a flag-boat anchored in the middle of the river, and home to the starting-point. Half the battle was to get round the turn. Our long and heavy boat was a bad one for the purpose. The Chester men had an admirably-constructed craft, the *Deva* (built by Searle, the crack race-gig builder, of London), a beautiful little boat, short, with plenty of sheer, feather-weight, stained and varnished, turning on the water like a top. The Chester coxswain was a little man of mature years, who knew every yard of the course. He was considered the cleverest coxswain in Chester, and was invariably successful. The Chester men won the toss, and took the inside berth. *We* got off to a good start, and with a faster stroke ran ahead by over two lengths to the turn. Here we lost ground. We had a desperate struggle, backing water to starboard and pulling to port, to get round. Up came the *Deva*; ran past us; turned almost in her own length; and headed for home. Our case seemed hopeless; but my crew made a magnificent spurt; and the two strokes fairly lifted the boat out of the water.

Just as we were overhauling the Chester boat, I saw, to my consternation, my two bows turn deadly pale: the pace was telling on them. They still put in all they knew; but had lost power; and were working with little effect. Fortunately, my two strokes could not see them. Urged by the close proximity of the *Deva*, Tobin and Eaton made a fine effort; and increased their power to such an extent that the *Crusader* fairly jumped ahead. Meanwhile, *I* had all my work cut out. The Chester coxswain, notoriously astute, saw we would assuredly overhaul him. We were on the shore side; and as we came up he made a determined effort to force our oars into the river bank. I braced my nerves; and just managed to foil him. My strokes maintained their wonderful spurt; and we pulled in winners by only half a boat's length, the best race ever rowed on the Dee. Thousands of people lined the river banks. I was only fifteen years old, so I was carried shoulder high from the *Crusader* to the club-house. The fact is, the crowd saw the Chester coxswain's dodge for fouling me; and appreciated my rising to the occasion. Our victory was remarkable. Never



GREAT BOAT RACE ON THE DEE IN 1840 FOR THE MARQUIS OF WESTMINSTER'S GOLD CUP.—*Page 20.*

DEVA.—J. Chaloner—E. W. Potts W. Mulvey T. Mulvey, *stroke*—E. Moss, *coxswain*.

CRUSADER.—A. Crooke—W. Eaton—G. Burgoyne—A. Tobin, *stroke*—H. K. Aspinall, *coxswain*.

before had the Chester men lost a race on their own river. They were considered one of the crack crews in all England.

The Chester men caused much indignation among our fellows by expressing their intention to send one hundred guineas in cash, as they feared the Marquis might be offended at their throwing open the race without his authority. He had presented the cup to the Chester clubs, of which there were two or three. Our men, however, insisted on their rights; and eventually the cup was sent. When, some years after, the Crusader club was given up, the members drew lots for the prizes; and the Marquis's cup was drawn by our commodore, Thomas Littledale, one of the most respected men in Liverpool. I have now in my possession the little red and white satin cross *Crusader* flag, which flew on the stern of my boat; and was subsequently sent to me by the club.

Shortly after the race, our commodore's brother, Alfred Littledale, was drowned in the Mersey. He was stroke in a race-boat, called the *Echo*, which had been lying at Moss's boat-house, at Otterspool, during the winter; and had, the

following summer, to be brought over for the boating season to the Cheshire shore. I was coxswain of the *Echo*; but on this particular morning was unable to go with the crew. One of our members, Taunton, offered to go in my place. The river was choppy; a strong breeze was blowing from the south; and it was flood tide. The boat, it appears, was fastened with iron nails (which had corroded), instead of copper. Just as the rickety craft was heading for Rock Ferry, it suddenly parted into pieces; and the crew were thrown into the water. Alfred Little-dale, together with Ramsey and Clement Royds, struck out for the shore; but all three were drowned. Taunton and Crewe clung to the wreck of the boat. Happily, they were seen by the look-out from one of the Lazarettoes, which then lay in the quarantine ground between Rock Ferry and New Ferry, and saved; but their rescuers came too late to help the three struggling for the shore. Strange to say, the three lost were strong swimmers; the two saved could not swim a stroke; hence their clinging to the boat. The bodies of Ramsey and Clement Royds were soon recovered; but it was not until about a month

after the accident that Alfred Littledale's body was picked up in the Ribble, between Southport and Preston, over twenty miles from the scene of the disaster. Poor fellow! he was at a music party at my father's house only a week before he was drowned.

The Mersey is yearly becoming more and more dangerous for boating and yachting. The building of sea-walls and docks on each side has narrowed the stream, and brought into being a rapid current, at spring tides, of from seven to eight knots velocity. The surface of the water, once smooth and clear as the water round the Isle of Man, is now broken and thick; while the beautiful seaweed once covering the beach from New Brighton to Eastham has given place to dirty grass and mud. Periwinkles, crabs, shrimps, and whelks have almost disappeared from the banks of the Mersey. Such are some of the changes wrought by the mighty hand of Commerce! Over one million souls are now dwelling on the shores of the once limpid Mersey. As the population increases, so will all trace of the pure sea water, which of old time was our delight, disappear. And yet, it seems but the other day that the

white, hard sand between Woodside Ferry and Seacombe was covered with bathing machines and bathers, as was also that between Tranmere and Rock Ferry. If it were not for the two tides rising and falling every twenty-four hours, the river would now be a veritable cesspool! What will be the ultimate outcome of the enormous amount of sewage continually discharged into the Mersey, who can say? The dear old river continues to ebb and to flow; but its character is entirely changed; and few, alas! remain who knew it in its brighter days.

CHAPTER IV.

The Old Abbey, Birkenhead—St. Mary's Church—A Sunday-Morning Prank—Boys' Mischievous Practical Joke—The *President*—A Sad Accident—My Voyage to America—My Impressions of Americans—My First Love—Loss of the *President*—A Hunting Mourner.

IN the early 'twenties, the only place of worship in Birkenhead was the old Abbey. St. Mary's church was then in course of erection. The Abbey was lighted for evening service with wax candles. Most of these were supplied by Squire Webster; who lived in good style; and was on intimate terms with the Rev. Andrew Knox; also with old Mr. Newton, the first pastor. At Upton Hall, the best spermaceti candles were used; and no candle was ever lighted a second time. Every Saturday, Broster, the butter farmer, of Upton, brought the candles to the Abbey.

One Sunday morning, when the vicar was leaving his house for the schools, much to his

horror he found outside his door a huge bunch of gold grapes hanging from a sign, which had been removed during the night from the old Waterloo Inn. This practical joke was played by some young fellows from London, visiting at Captain Chappell's.

When the old clerk of the church (who acted as sexton and verger) died, Mr. Knox engaged a highly respectable man, Mr. Thompson, to act as clerk only. He was a tall, slim man, dressed in black cloth and white choker of great size: in this respect, he exactly copied Mr. Knox. We boys made up our minds to have a game with him. Mr. Thompson used to go to early school on Sunday mornings; and he invariably passed our stable-yard doors. Our gardener had a large squirt for the fruit trees. This, together with a stable bucket full of water, was taken into the hay-loft, where we boys were all quietly seated. As the clock struck nine, our victim, looking quite smart in his Sunday clerical clothes, top hat, black kid gloves, and white cravat, walked down the lane. Just as he was passing, a signal was given, and the squirt set to work. Mr. Thompson, not only drenched, but seriously alarmed

with the shock, ran full speed down Priory Lane to Mr. Knox. The dear old vicar at once hurried off to my father, who was very angry, and assured Mr. Knox we should be severely punished. On our showing penitence, we were allowed to go to church ; but poor Mr. Thompson did not turn up again that day. He' was for many years with Mr. Knox ; and was much respected. He died in Birkenhead some years ago.

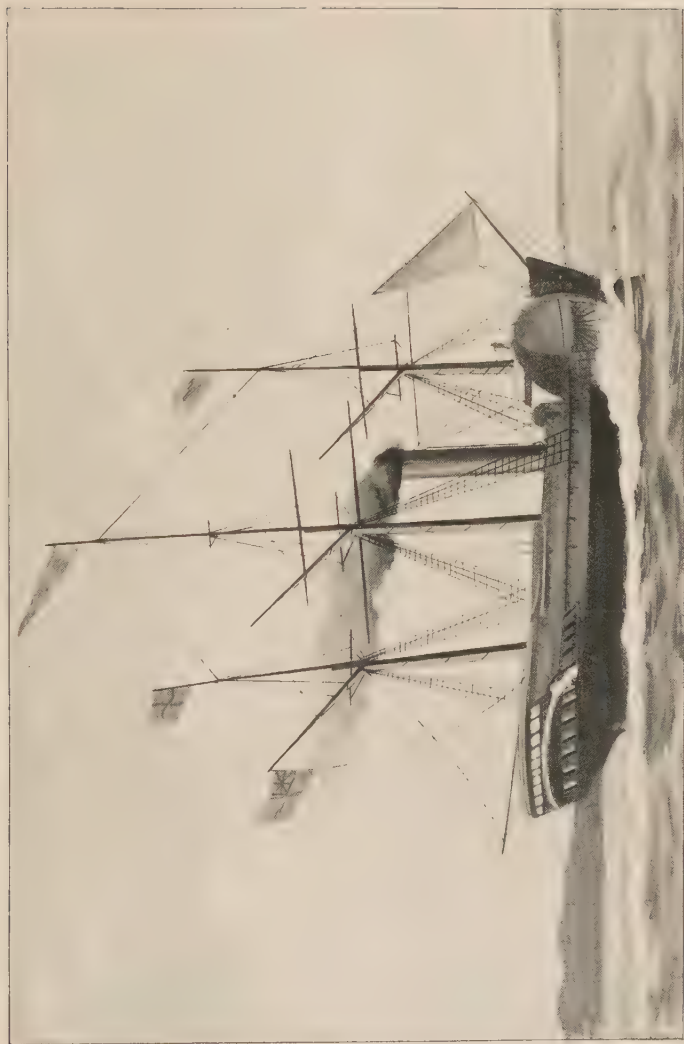
In August, 1840, I sailed from Liverpool in the steamship *President* for New York. I was then an apprentice boy with Fawcett & Preston ; who made and fitted the engines, 520 horse-power. The steamer was 2300 tons ; and she sailed under jury masts from London to Liverpool. She had to put in for shelter three times *en voyage* ; and on arrival was detained six months in the Trafalgar New Dock.

The day after she arrived I was busy below helping to level the keelson before fixing the bed-plates, when a heavy body flew close past me, and fell with a dull thud. On turning round, I saw the boatswain, a fine young fellow, lying across the keelson. He had fallen from the

main deck and broken his back. The unfortunate man was removed to the hospital, where he died in a few days.

The *President's* engines were side-lever jet condensers, cast-iron gothic framing entablature, air-pumps, etc. All the work was good, both polished and painted. A better job in those days could not have been turned out. All Fawcett & Preston's work was A1.

Macgregor Laird, the great African traveller, obtained permission from William Fawcett for me to go the first voyage to New York ; and a grand time I had living in my own small state-room, with a boy as companion. I took my engine-room watch regularly. Oh, what a happy time it was ! Soon after passing Cape Clear, a dense fog came on, and continued until we nearly reached the banks of Newfoundland. It had not lifted above two hours when we came upon two French fishing vessels anchored directly on our track. We had had a narrow escape of a dangerous collision. Our captain stopped the engines and spoke the first vessel. She had 11,000 codfish on board, and was shortly returning to France.



THE ATLANTIC LINER *PRESIDENT*, 1840. — *Page 28.*

When within about 200 miles of New York, a pilot boarded us. The pilot boat was a beautiful little schooner, painted white, and built on similar lines to the celebrated Baltimore clippers. It was understood that the first pilot who boarded us would get a handsome gratuity. It is quite unusual for pilots to go so far out to sea; but as the *President* was the largest and one of the first steamships to cross the Atlantic, New York was in a state of excitement. I was much struck with the grace and beauty of the little pilot schooners and their snow-white cotton sails. To my mind, they were very much prettier craft than the existing racing yachts.

The arrival of our big steamer was a great event. New York harbour, from the Narrows to the city, was *en fête*. The American line-of-battle ship, the *North Carolina*, was anchored off the battery, Castle Gardens. She manned yards and fired a salute.

We had some very nice passengers on board; and our travellers were rather sad at parting, though well pleased at reaching their destination. One very kind fellow asked me to visit him at

his home, near Niagara. He was an English officer, and his wife was English. He had a piano on board, a present from England. I spent two days with them, about two miles from the Clifton House, Niagara Falls; and shall never forget their kindness. I had many letters of introduction to Americans. The kind hospitality I received, and I only a boy of sixteen, is as fresh in my mind now as it was then. America and Americans have ever had a warm corner in my heart; and I always speak of them in the most affectionate terms. Wherever I went, I was not allowed to pay for anything. Free tickets were provided on every hand. In four weeks from leaving Liverpool and returning to my home, I travelled 8000 miles; and only spent eight pounds, which included little presents for those at home. When in New York, I lived on board the steamer, and by so doing entirely escaped the mosquitoes. It was fearfully hot that August: 98° shade, 120° sun.

At my age, I may own to my first boyish love on board the *President*. The sweetest American girl that imagination can picture, age fifteen,

used to come on board the steamer with her sister, the doctor's *fiancée*, both lovely girls. Mine took my heart clean away, and I took hers. We vowed eternal love; and the parting at the Narrows (for she came with us thus far) was, I may say, tearful and heart-breaking. We both cried bitterly. She had made and presented me with a purse (empty), which I placed next my heart. I, alas! could only give her in return—well, I leave that to the reader's imagination. A few days at sea healed my bleeding heart; and from that day to this I have never seen or heard anything more of my first darling. I believe her father was a worthy tailor in New York city.

The *President* made a good run home to Liverpool, sixteen days. She again crossed to New York and back, a winter voyage; but the following March on her return voyage to Liverpool, with 140 souls on board, she was lost. The American packet-ship, *Cambridge*, spoke her three days out from New York. It was then blowing hard, with big seas; and ice was floating in huge masses. This was the last that was ever heard of the *President*. There is little doubt that she

struck the ice, stove in her bows, and sank with all on board. She was a timber built vessel ; and bulkheads were hardly known in those days. The celebrated actor, Power, was on board ; also Lord W. Lennox, son of the Duke of Richmond. The total loss of the vessel was exceptionally hard on the crew, as Captain Roberts, together with nearly all the crew of the *British Queen*, sister ship to the *President*, had been transferred from the *British Queen* to the *President* for that particular voyage ; the owners, for some reason best known to themselves, believing that a new command and a new crew might increase the speed of the ill-fated ship.

A noted character in Liverpool, a highly respectable and well-to-do man, was very fond of sport of all kinds, hunting in particular ; but he had neither time nor money, he used to say, to enable him to indulge himself. One day, he appeared on the Wirral hunting-field, at the cover side, early in the afternoon. So seldom was he to be seen after the hounds that my father shouted : " Halloo ! So-and-so ; how is it you are hunting to-day ? " " Well, Mr. Aspinall,"

he said, almost in a whisper : " the fact is, I have just been burying my mother ; and I thought on leaving the funeral I could not do better than spend the afternoon with the fox-hounds, as it was really too late to do any good at the office ! "



CHAPTER V.

My Father's Old Hunting Friends—A Hunting Song—A Great Run from Union Gorse—My Father's Moonlight Adventure—Rook Shooting at Puddington—A Short-Sighted Sportsman—A Great Run from Hooton Hall—An Impromptu Dinner—Will Brancker—A Fox on the Summit of Beeston Castle—The Tollemaches — Early Electioneering in Wirral — An Old Hunter's Freak—Sam and Will Blain—David Taylor—My Father and Robert Britain—Half-a-crown Rigby.

MY father used to speak of some real good sportsmen amongst his Liverpool friends—Peter Carter, a well-known Liverpool man, and a forward rider, especially when mounted on his celebrated grey hunter; the Neilsons, Dick Scholes, Bob Horsfall, T. M. Mackay, and other well-known men of the time.

It was indeed a treat to hear that fine, old, handsome sportsman, George Blake, troll his hunting-song—

I'm a hunting physician, and cure every ill,
Disorder, or pain without bolus or pill.
Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho!

Come on, ye old codgers whose nerves are unstrung,
Come fellow the hounds, and you'll hunt yourselves young.

Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho !

'Twill cure the short cough and the rheumatic pain,
Come follow the hounds, and you're all young again.

Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho !

If perchance ye are plagued with a termagant wife,
Who, instead of a joy, is the bane of your life.

Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho !

When madam her small talk begins to let go,
Then draw on your boots, and away, tally ho !

Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho !

Brush up to them quickly and try them again,
For sportsmen love ladies, and ladies love them.

Tally ho, tally ho, tally ho !

My father loved hunting. He often talked of the great run of his life with Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton fox-hounds.

Reynard was found in Union Gorse, near Capenhurst. He was evidently a travelling dog-fox, ignorant of the Wirral country. 'Twas the morning of an early spring day, with a good scent. The fox got well away from cover, his head pointing north ; and ran at a rattling pace almost straight through the vale of Wirral, between Willaston and Neston, making for Arrowe and

Woodchurch. These he passed on his left, leaving Bidston Hill on his right. Close to the village, he turned across Bidston Marsh, over the Fender, towards Wallasey Sandhills. Finally, the hounds ran into him on the Wallasey shore. Distance run : over twenty miles, almost in a direct line : horses and hounds all dead beat. Few saw the finish. The Wirral country is always a stiff one to ride over : big rotten cops and fences, broad deep ditches, with heavy ploughed fields, mostly clayey soil. Strange to say, although there were many covers on his line, the fox never entered either wood or gorse.

One fine moonlight night, after a dinner-party, my father drove home from a friend's house about eight miles from Birkenhead. He preferred an open vehicle, with one horse, driven by himself ; but was always attended by a groom or a coachman. When driving along the old Chester Road towards Lower Tranmere, he saw some distance ahead two men standing almost in the middle of the road. On nearing them, the men quickly separated, and took up positions one on each side of the road. My father, suspicious of the movement, smartly touched his horse, a

high-spirited animal, which at once went at full gallop. The men rushed forward and tried to seize the reins; but the pace of the horse flung them on one side, and my father reached home in safety. In those days, the roads were very lonesome at night; there was no gas or artificial light of any kind; and, as for constables, there was only a mere handful in the hundred of Wirral.

At Hooton and Puddington, owned by Sir Thomas Stanley, there were large rookeries. Sir Thomas invariably invited my father to the shooting parties. I remember one great day we had at Puddington. My father, my brothers, Mr. Cockerill, Warner Shand, and others drove a large open carriage; and our butcher lent us his cart to bring home the dead rooks. The rookeries were swarming with birds; and Sir Thomas expected us to take home all we shot. Guns, not rifles, were used. After luncheon we began shooting; but the branches of the trees soon got covered with dead rooks, and it was necessary to clear them. Warner Shand, who was short-sighted, had sent a boy up a large tree thick with leaves to shake down as many dead birds as possible. Imagining that the boy had

come down, and thinking he saw a number of birds, he fired his gun. There was a fearful shriek ; and a voice called out : " I'm shot." The boy was assisted down and stripped, when it was discovered that several shot had entered the lower portion of his back. Some were picked out with a penknife ; and he was then sent home. Warner gave him a sovereign ; and the little fellow was so pleased I believe he would have gone up to be shot at again on the same terms. Few shot had penetrated ; and the injury was but slight. We shot over forty dozen rooks ; and Birkenhead and district were soon sated with rook-pie, as my father distributed the birds among all classes in the village. Some consider rook-pie equal to or better than pigeon-pie. At home, we never fancied it. Rooks are very black ; and, like their nests, swarm with vermin.

One of the most delightful hunting days in my memory was a grand run with Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton hounds. The meet was Hooton Hall. Our horses were sent on early in the morning ; and fed and put up in the Hooton stables until we arrived at half-past ten. We drove there ; and breakfasted at the Hall. Rey-

nard was soon found in the Hooton cover ; and a fine run he gave us right away to Frodsham, where the hounds killed him in a pig-sty. It was then early in the afternoon ; so my father said that as we had to ride home over twenty miles, we had better call on an old friend of his, William Hayes. Mr. Hayes was away from home ; but his good wife gave us a most hospitable reception. When we had put our horses up, my father asked Mrs. Hayes if she could give us some dinner. There were four or five of us. She said she feared it would be but a poor meal in such a hurry, as they did not dine until six, and the fillet of veal they were to have, had only just been put on the spit. My father promptly suggested that the joint should be taken from the fire, and a portion made into cutlets, which could be cooked in about half an hour. This was done. We enjoyed an excellent meal ; and then started off at dusk for our ride to Birkenhead, where we arrived at a late hour. We must have ridden at least sixty miles that day.

One of the best men across Wirral with Sir Thomas Stanley's fox-hounds was William Brancker. He was over six feet high, and heavy

at that. He rode a grand little brown bob-tail mare, only about fifteen hands. Will's legs almost reached the ground. Nevertheless, she carried him splendidly, always well up with the hounds; and seldom came to grief. She was a perfect little wonder over fences. Will was a bold rider; and was much sought after by owners of young hunters. Murray, of Manchester, the well-known horse-dealer, mounted him whenever he had a chance; and sold many horses at good prices shown off by Will Brancker. He was my cousin; and usually dined at my father's after hunting. I remember how fond Will was of his beer. He drank little or no wine or spirits. One day at dinner, after a hard day's hunting, Will swallowed so many glasses of beer that my father jocosely remarked that he would order a cask to be placed on the table; and Will could then help himself. Will only laughed.

One day, a fox, after running through Peckferton, and passing the Hall, evidently making for Huxley, being hard pressed, ran into the ruins of old Beeston Castle, up into the ivy of the tower. When his retreat was discovered, he jumped down almost into the hounds' mouths.

The Tollemaches, always true to fox-hunting, preserved the foxes most sacredly ; and the Peckferton Woods were never drawn blank. John Tollemache, afterwards Lord Tollemache, a thorough-bred Conservative, loved hunting ; and so does the present Lord. At one time, all the Tollemache horses were chestnuts—hunters, hacks, carriage, and cart horses. John Tollemache drove four horses. He was an accomplished whip.

When I was a little boy, John Tollemache and Sir Philip Egerton, of Oulton Park, came to Birkenhead canvassing votes as candidates for the county. They lunched at my father's house ; and he accompanied them on their electioneering tours. There was much excitement at election time. Red and blue were the Tory colours ; and to such an extent were the party colours displayed that I remember our house, both inside and out, was decorated with red and blue flags and ribbons ; and that we children were all decked out in gay red and blue colours : the dining-table was also ornamented with red and blue flowers ; in fact, the eye met red and blue wherever it fell.

My father once sent a favourite hunter, called "Birmingham," which had gone lame, to a lea having very soft, salty soil, near Shotwick, by the Dee. He wanted the horse to have quiet rest during the early summer months. However, the old hunter was not happy; for one night our head-groom was startled by hearing horses' hoofs outside the stable-yard. On opening the gates, what should he see but old "Birmingham" and two strange mares. After taking them inside, the groom went to the house, and sent in word to my father that a gentleman and two ladies wished to see him at the stables. My father's astonishment when he saw the three animals was great. Next day, the mares were sent back to the lea; but old "Birmingham" was taken to Bidston Marsh, which was well fenced, and the land moist and soft. Had he been returned to Shotwick, "Birmingham" would most certainly have come back home again, as he knew the country so well.

I had two very old and intimate hunting friends in Cheshire, Sam and Will Blain. Sam died a few years ago: Will is still living. Two better sportsmen never rode to hounds. They

thoroughly loved fox-hunting ; and indulged in it to the fullest extent. They were both heavy men ; and required big horses to carry them. Perhaps the cattle they rode were unsurpassed in the county.

A well-known and popular man in the late 'thirties and early 'forties was David Taylor, nephew to Mr. Pool, who kept the Woodside Ferry Hotel and coaching stables. David Taylor was a fine, handsome fellow ; and as nice as he was good-looking. He was an excellent rider ; and hunted regularly with Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton hounds. Latterly, he had charge of an important goods traffic department of the London and North-Western Railway Company ; which position he held until the day of his death only a few years ago.

R. & W. Britain were celebrated tailors, doing a large business in Chester. Robert Britain was a wealthy bachelor ; and lived with his sister at Hoole. Such a nice old couple they were. Their house was a delightful one to stop at ; and occasionally my father (who was a great friend of Mr. Britain's) took me as a youngster to stay at Hoole ; and to hunt with the Cheshire hounds.

One day, on the hunting-field, Robert Britain, a thorough sportsman, was talking to a group of hunting-men when the conversation turned on hunting-clothes. My father, by way of a joke, called out: "I'll give you an order now, Bob, on condition that you measure me right away." "Done," said Robert Britain; "jump off your horse. I always carry my tape in my pocket;" and, amid loud laughter from the field, he took the necessary measurements; got on his horse again; and away after the hounds.

A well-known Liverpool man, James Rigby, occasionally hunted; and was noted as the owner of good horses. One day, Joe Howard, Sir Thomas Stanley's first whip, was crossing a field near Mollington, bringing up some stray hounds, when he saw by the side of a ditch a man's hat. He rode up; and found a horse and a man in a most exhausted state, lying jammed in the ditch. Joe at once galloped off to the nearest farmhouse; got men and ropes; and, returning to the spot, extricated man and horse from a somewhat perilous position. Rigby, for it was he, was taken to the nearest house; and afterwards conveyed in a carriage to his home. He suffered for

some time ; but eventually recovered. Meeting my father in Liverpool one day, he requested him to give Joe Howard 2s. 6d. for him at the next meet. My father, who at times could be very blunt, asked Rigby if that were the sum at which he valued his life ; adding, indignantly, that pounds would hardly repay the obligation Rigby was under to Joe and the other men who saved his life. Rigby was promptly nicknamed Half-a-crown Rigby, by which his mean conduct was made known to the whole of the hunt.

CHAPTER VI.

Early Ferry-Boats — The *Old Peg* — Woodside Ferry — Hugh Williams and Francis Richard Price — Hugh Williams and Family — Hugh Williams, Junior, and the Dock Cottages — Freehold of Woodside Ferry for Sale : Price £250 — Tragic Fate of the Strange Guest at Woodside Ferry Tavern — Hugh Williams and Coal Deposits at Hoylake — Ancient Ferry Rights — G. le French and Birkenhead Ferry — Mr. Ball and Birkenhead Ferry — The Hetheringtons — My First Real Sorrow — A Charming Young Widow — Early Ferry Paddle-Steamers — An Abortive Trial Trip — The Willoughbys — Primitive Methods of Landing and Embarking — Mr. Lawton's Residence — Sam Fogg's Leg — "Davy" — Hamilton Square — The Stone City — The Forsyths — A Romantic Incident.

IN the early 'twenties, Birkenhead and Liverpool were connected by rowing and sailing ferry-boats. These, in the 'thirties, made way for small though safe paddle-steamers. The ferryage was 3d. each passenger ; 1s. a horse ; 2s. a carriage.

The *Old Peg* was, I believe, the first steamboat placed on the Woodside Ferry, then rented by Hugh Williams from Francis Richard

Price, the lord of the manor, and owner of all Birkenhead.

Hugh Williams was a joiner and builder ; and kept the Woodside Ferry Hotel, a small riverside inn, with a fine old wooden veranda in front, painted green. Here people sat enjoying the fresh air ; and smoking their white clay churchwarden pipes, made at Broseley, Salop.

Hugh Williams was a most active business man. Many of his houses and shops, large and small, still stand in Birkenhead, well-built and occupied. Indeed, he built the greater part of the houses in Birkenhead erected in his time. The Pier Hotel, Woodside, he built for himself ; and removed there on leaving the ferry house. His wife was a dear, kind, simple-hearted old lady, very kind to us boys. The sons and daughters were well brought up. James, the eldest, died of consumption when young. Hugh succeeded his father in the building trade ; and did a large business as Birkenhead advanced. His most notable work was the building of the Dock Cottages at the north end of Birkenhead.

Hugh Williams once told my father that Francis Richard Price offered to sell him the

Woodside Ferry property, including the freehold of the ferry, with all its rights and privileges in perpetuity, together with the old Woodside Ferry hotel, for the sum of £250, all told; the money to be paid at Mr. Williams' convenience. After mature consideration, Hugh Williams said he thought the risk too great. The passenger service was then small, and the working expenses heavy; while the business done at the hotel was inconsiderable, and its prospects insufficiently bright to risk so large an outlay. The property thus offered in the early 'twenties for £250 could not now be purchased for half a million sterling.

When Hugh Williams kept the Woodside Ferry Hotel, he gave my father a handsome corkwood walking-stick. It had belonged to an old gentleman who stayed at the inn for several weeks. No one knew his name, or whence he came. One morning he was missing. The door of his room was locked inside; and, strange to say, no suspicion arose as to his whereabouts. The door was not burst open for two days, when his dead body was found in bed. The remains were at once removed to

an outbuilding ; and an inquest was held within a few hours. Before he was sealed up in his coffin, his face and other portions of his body were devoured by rats. The incident was well advertised ; but no clue was ever found as to the stranger's identity. The stick was in my possession for many years after my father's death.

Hugh Williams was a man of enterprise. He built several houses at Hoylake ; and believed the celebrated Mostyn coal deposits extended under the Dee into the Wirral peninsula, more especially beneath the sandhills at Hoylake. Consequently, he employed a number of men in boring operations ; and spent a large sum of money, until he was wearied with the perpetual drain upon his resources. It was reported (and there is little doubt that the rumour was correct), that the men employed were so well satisfied with the work that they made up their minds Mr. Williams should not cease the operations without a struggle on their part. They therefore passed small pieces of coal and slack down the bore-holes ; so that when the boring tools were drawn up from time to time there

was every indication of a good deposit of coal. At last, Hugh Williams discovered the deception; dismissed the men; and disposed of the boring appliances. Whether or not there are coal deposits in the neighbourhood still remains in doubt. Seeing that coal is got in such large quantities at Neston on the Dee, a few miles away, to say nothing of the Mostyn mines across the Dee, there are apparently good grounds for Hugh Williams' theory. In his time, a good coal mine was considered equal to a gold mine; though such property does not now yield the vast fortunes once realised.

There are certain ancient rights vested in the owners of the Cheshire ferries. No passenger from Liverpool can legally land in Birkenhead, or its surroundings on the Cheshire side, except at such landing-places as are clearly defined. That is to say, ferryage must be paid.

The first man to utilise the Birkenhead Ferry for passenger service was G. le French, who kept the Waterloo Inn, a well-patronised and comfortable hostelry near the ferry premises. G. le French was very popular in the quiet society in which he moved.

The Birkenhead Ferry, the Ferry Hotel, and the adjacent land were the property of William Hetherington; who resided in the house now occupied by the Mersey Yacht Club, near the Birkenhead Iron Works.

John Ball, a kind-hearted man, kept the hotel; which was well patronised by Liverpool and Chester county people. The Birkenhead Ferry was also rented and worked by Mr. Ball; who had, in addition, an extensive coaching business. The old stables, with large courtyard and out-buildings, remain; but the hotel was pulled down years ago for the purpose of extending Lairds' Works. In front of the hotel, overlooking the river, were pretty tea-gardens, which were very nicely kept. Here people, mostly from Liverpool, assembled during the summer for teas and dinners. There was also a bowling-green, with many subscribers; and excellent club dinners were held during the season. Many evenings have I enjoyed there in my younger days.

William Hetherington married a delightful young lady, a Miss Grindrod; who survived her husband for many years. He died when quite a young man; and left two sons, William and

George, schoolfellows of mine, and from childhood very dear friends. They each died at the age of seventeen years. I followed their remains to the grave in St. Mary's Churchyard, where a marble memento was erected by their mother. It was long before I recovered from this, my first real sorrow. Consumption was the cause of their early death. We spent many happy days together; boating on the river in summer; and hunting with Sir Thomas Stanley's hounds with our parents in winter. My father and William Hetherington were old friends. Happy days we had in early Birkenhead. No humbug, or absurdly dignified demeanour, in these latter days so prevalent. Hail fellows, well met!

Mrs. Hetherington was a charming young widow. She married a second time; and went to reside in Cheltenham, where her second husband died. She subsequently married a third time; and again buried her husband. After this, she remained a widow for some years.

The Mersey Yacht Club, I hope, continues to prosper; but I have known little of it since the commodore, my friend, S. R. Graves, died.

I well remember the early Birkenhead paddle-steamers, the *James*, the *Britannia*, and the *William Fawcett*; built in Liverpool, and engined by Fawcett & Preston. These boats had plenty of deck-room for passengers, horses, carriages, and merchandise. All steamboats and sailing vessels were then built of wood.

John Ball invited a number of his friends to the trial trip of the *William Fawcett*; and announced his intention to cross over to Dublin, and to call at Holyhead for coal. However, the party only got as far as Holyhead; and were thankful to return without visiting the Irish capital. About twenty hours' steaming in a small vessel, nearly as broad as she was long, was quite enough in the chop of a channel sea.

Edward and Seymour Willoughby, succeeded John Ball; and a capital coaching, hotel, and ferry business they conducted. Edward was a much esteemed resident. He was a Birkenhead Commissioner for many years. Seymour was every inch a sportsman, known and liked all over Cheshire. He hunted regularly with the Hooton hounds; and was also well known in the hundred of Wirral as a crack shot.

Most interesting was it to see the Willoughbys' small steamers carry over the river four-horse coaches, carriages, and horses, without delay or accident. These were embarked from the narrow and dangerous stone slip; and discharged in the small George's Basin, now to be seen near the Baths Pier. The small ferry paddle-steamers were swung round in their own length by means of strong hawsers. At low water, passengers and goods had to be landed in large, flat-bottomed boats, called landing-boats; while the ferry-boat dropped anchor as near the shore as the water permitted. Many ludicrous and even dangerous scenes were witnessed, especially in stormy weather; but there was seldom any loss of life. When the tide permitted, boats, conveying passengers only, ran alongside the narrow steps immediately under the Baths wall; and passengers passed up and down the steps, landing and embarking.

Once a week during the summer season, there was a grand and most attractive display of fireworks at the Willoughbys' tea-gardens.

Francis Richard Price built for his resident agent, Mr. Lawton, a pretty house, close to

where the Park now is. There was only a rough cartway up to the entrance gates; but, at the time, the house was, without doubt, the finest in the neighbourhood. On Mr. Lawton's leaving Birkenhead, the house was occupied by Joseph Robinson Pim, a member of the Society of Friends, and closely connected with steamers trading to Ireland. J. R. Pim's steam-packet business was on an extensive scale for those days. Subsequently, the house was used as a school, the headmaster of which was Dr. Brindley. This was for some time a success; but eventually Dr. Brindley removed to mid-Cheshire. Soon after, the house was pulled down; and its site is now covered with streets of new houses.

One day, my brothers and I were playing on the old Birkenhead slip, when the slip-man asked us if we would like to see a man's leg, which had been taken off that morning by a coil of rope. Boy-like, we jumped at the chance; and were taken into a shed hard by. There, covered up in a basket, was some poor fellow's leg. The sight put a check on our curiosity for a long time to come. The man who was

hurt was old Sam Fogg. He quite recovered ; and for many years worked as slip-man with a wooden leg.

As a boy, I often crossed the river in the small ferry-steamers. There was an engine-driver, named Davy, who always stood at the engine driving-bar on deck. The captain stood near ; and when he gave his orders, always said : "Stop her, Davy," "Ease her, Davy," "Go ahead, Davy." We youngsters used to think the name of the engine was Davy.

Hamilton Square, Birkenhead, for uniformity of architecture and materials, is probably unsurpassed by any square in the kingdom. The designer, a Scotsman, based his plans on Glasgow and Edinburgh. The stone was taken from Storeton Quarries. It is beautifully white when new ; but smoke and soot very quickly turns it almost black. The builders were J. & W. Walker, of Birkenhead ; who also built the Manor House, Claughton. The founders of Birkenhead intended that all buildings erected should have stone frontages : in fact, its name was to have been the stone city. A plan was made at the instance of the first William Laird,

Sir John Tobin, and Thomas Forsyth, showing the exact arrangement of streets and buildings, squares, terraces, and crescents. The idea was to make Birkenhead and its environs a suburb of Liverpool, and a residential district for Liverpool merchants. It may be noticed that in the streets running out of Hamilton Square, the buildings abutting are nearly all stone-fronted, very much after the Square design.

Thomas Forsyth settled in Birkenhead in its early days. He was an intimate friend of the first William Laird ; also of John Laird, and other leading men in the district. His residence was one of the first houses built in Hamilton Square. Mr. Forsyth was a gentlemanly man ; and much respected. Indeed, all his family (and he had a large one, boys and girls) were very nice. We were very sorry when the Forsyths removed from the district.

In early Birkenhead, although fine houses at large rentals were built, the architects either did not think it necessary to provide, or would not go to the expense of providing, bathrooms. For a bath, it was then necessary to go to the river, the alternative being the dolly-tub.

A romantic incident occurred at one of the first houses erected in Hamilton Square. The gentleman residing there had three charming daughters, whose pretty faces and lovely figures excited the admiration and the imaginations of the few young men then resident in the neighbourhood. Needless to say, the girls were neither oblivious nor indifferent to the fact. Their ways of life would in some respects seem to be not altogether unknown. It was their custom to enjoy, each Saturday night, a primitive sort of bath in tubs at the top of the house. The room was lighted from the roof by means of a hinged skylight; which, unless specially secured inside, could be easily opened from without. One Saturday night, the girls were presiding as usual over their respective tubs, happy and merry in their seclusion, when suddenly a shadow fell across the skylight; the window was quietly opened; a man's hand appeared; and three beautiful roses, bearing the legend, "to the three Graces," were silently dropped at the feet of the astounded, and, let us hope, indignant nymphs. The intruder disappeared as quietly as he came; nor was he ever

discovered. Such an incident savours more of the days of minstrelsy and chivalry than of the prosaic nineteenth century. Indeed, the glamour of poetry and romance but faintly veils from our modern eyes the improper character of the act.

CHAPTER VII.

Early Postage—Rowland Hill—A Picturesque Incident—Early Postage Stamps — “Slit-Nose” — Early Birkenhead — The Booths—A Dog and Cat Fight—Miss Bradley’s Dog—A Venturesome Hare—Boating on the Mersey—A Ball-Room Incident—Alderman Williams—Pure “Cussedness.”

IN my schooldays, there was no penny postage, and no envelopes. Letters were simply folded and sealed. One class used a crest seal ; the others, wafers, red or black. These wafers were somewhat similar to signatory seals ; made of a soft substance ; dried ; and, previous to using, damped. The wafer was then placed between the folds of the letter ; pressed down ; and afterwards stamped with a rough surface for security. Well do I remember my dear mother’s welcome and affectionate monthly letter when I was at school ; sealed with very thick red or black wax ; and stamped with her signet-ring. This was essential ; as she always placed a half-sovereign under the wax. I fear in those

careless schoolboy days I thought more of what was under the seal than of my darling mother's letter, dearly as I loved her. She was a perfect woman, and the guardian angel of us all!

In those days, the rates of postage were very high; and varied most irregularly. A peculiar custom empowered Members of Parliament to frank letters; *i.e.* sign their names on the outside. A letter was thus freed from all postal charges. This privilege led to a vast amount of corruption; and the franking of electors' letters by Members of Parliament became a favourite device for securing votes.

Harriet Martineau tells a pathetic story illustrative of the shortcomings of the postage system prior to the reform inaugurated by Rowland (afterwards Sir Rowland) Hill.

"Mr. Rowland Hill, when a young man, was walking through the Lake district, when he one day saw a postman deliver a letter to a woman at a cottage door. The woman turned it over and examined it, and then returned it, saying that she could not pay the postage, which was a shilling. Hearing that the letter

was from her brother, Mr. Hill paid the postage in spite of the manifest unwillingness of the woman. As soon as the postman was out of sight she showed Mr. Hill how his money had been wasted, as far as she was concerned. The sheet was blank. There was an agreement between her brother and herself that as long as all went well with him he should send a blank sheet in this way once a quarter; and she thus had tidings of him without expense of postage. Most people would have remembered this incident as a curious story to tell; but Mr. Hill's was a mind which wakened up at once to a sense of the significance of the fact. There must be something wrong in a system which drove a brother and sister to cheating, in order to gratify their desire to hear of one another's welfare. It was easy enough in those days for anyone whose attention was turned towards the subject to collect a mass of anecdotes of such cheating. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, lovers and friends, must have tidings of each other, where there is any possibility of obtaining them; and those who had not shillings to spend in postage—who could no more spend

shillings in postage than the class above them could spend hundreds of pounds on pictures—would resort to any device of communication, without thinking there was any harm in such cheating, because no money was kept back from Government which could have been paid. There was curious dotting in newspapers, by which messages might be spelled out. Newspapers being franked by writing on the covers the names of Members of Parliament, a set of signals was arranged, by which the names selected were made to serve as a bulletin. Men of business so wrote letters as that several might go on one sheet, which was to be cut up and distributed. The smuggling of letters by carriers was enormous. After all expenditure of time and ingenuity, there remained, however, a terrible blank of enforced silence.”

Rowland Hill gradually thought out a comprehensive scheme ; and after much opposition he had the satisfaction of seeing his views adopted and carried into effect.

I remember the first penny postage stamps were issued in sheets ; gummed, but not perforated. Hence it was necessary to divide them

by using scissors. Shortly afterwards, an inventive mind patented a simple machine for perforating, by means of which stamps could be torn off as required with ease and rapidity. The invention was offered to the Post Office authorities; who purchased it at a figure most inadequate for a machine so valuable when rapid separation of paper is required. But, then, how often *does* the inventor reap the fruits of his labour?

In the early penny postage days, there was no such thing as the Post Office receiving money and remitting it, either by means of postal orders, or any other mode. Bankers bills were mostly used for remittances: cheques very rarely.

When a little boy, playing in the field in front of my father's house, I mounted one of the cows which was lying down. The cow jumped up at once; and went careering across the field with me on its back. Mr. Lomax, a neighbour, was passing at the time; and he was good enough to rescue me from what might have been, at my tender age, a perilous position.

Soon after this, I was playing behind one of

the horses in the same field, when he threw up his heels, and almost smashed my nose to pieces. The doctor had very great difficulty in securing it. Fortunately, or unfortunately shall I say, there was no real damage done. My face, however, was disfigured; and I was nicknamed "slit-nose" at school; which was not very soothing to one's youthful feelings.

I remember when Birkenhead consisted of some three or four streets. There were no underground sewers or kerb stones or flagged footpaths. Everything was primitive. One constable had charge of the town during the day. He resided at the Bridewell; and looked after the prisoners. At night, our one watchman used to walk round the various gardens with us boys; when we often started a hare or a rabbit; and were sometimes on the scent of a fox in the outskirts.

Booth, the constable, was a powerful man. I once saw him have a terrific battle with a flat-man; whom he finally secured and locked up. There was then in use an awful instrument of torture, called sugar-nipping handcuffs. The handcuff was held almost like a pair of nut-

crackers; one end was similar to nippers or scissors; while the other formed a handle which opened and shut by a spring. Booth had a knack of nipping one hand in the palm; and then, whilst the prisoner was disabled and writhing in agony, he would slip the other or handle end on to his wrist. I well remember old Booth's sugar-nipping handcuffs; but the law stepped in and prohibited the use of such instruments. Mrs. Booth was a kind old woman; and often made us some tea and buttered toast in her Bridewell home. When her husband died, she and her son, Henry, started bathing-machines on Tranmere beach. My father sold them an old sociable kind of 'bus; which they hired out for a time, and then made into a bathing-machine.

There were no cabs in those days. The Woodside and the Birkenhead Hotel proprietors had on hire post-chaises with two horses, but no one-horse vehicles. The lowest fare was 2s. or 2s. 6d. a mile, exclusive of the coachman's fee.

On part of the site of Birkenhead Park, used to stand a small farm through which passed a cart-road. At the corner of one of the lanes,

stood a beer-house ; kept by Hannah Mutch, the farmer of the land. She sold large quantities of beer ; and offered many inducements to make her house a popular resort. A badger was kept on the premises ; and there was also a room at the back of her house kept for rat-killing and dog-fighting. Needless to say, the county constable did not give himself overmuch trouble in prying into the business done by Mrs. Mutch.

One day, my brother was passing the beer-house with a thoroughbred white bull terrier. He was much attached to this dog ; which accompanied him wherever he went. Suddenly, an enormous cat, which belonged to Mrs. Mutch, rushed out and attacked the dog. It was a huge tom-cat, as savage as a tiger. The dog was equal to the occasion ; and a desperate fight began. So long as the cat kept upon his legs, Mrs. Mutch did not interfere ; but the moment the dog was uppermost, and the cat appeared to be getting the worst of it, the old woman made an awful row ; and vowed vengeance in the event of the cat being killed. With some difficulty, the cat was removed in a

very bad state ; and the dog, fearfully torn and scratched, was also taken away. I believe they both recovered ; and Mrs. Mutch declared her willingness to back her cat against any dog in Birkenhead or Wirral for a sovereign. The beer-house was pulled down many years ago ; and the licence ceased to exist.

A very pretty villa situate on the banks of the Mersey, now the site of Clover's ship-building-yard, was occupied by an elderly maiden lady, Miss Bradley, who had a pet dog, " Fido," to which she was much attached. Rarely was either the dog or Miss Bradley seen except in each other's company. Fido was a King Charles spaniel ; very pretty and very fat. One fine moonlight night, my eldest brother and I were out walking ; and when passing Miss Bradley's entrance gates our bull terrier made a sudden spring into the shrubbery. We heard a great noise ; and thought " Guess " had tackled a cat ; but soon found that it was Miss Bradley's dog he was shaking ; and we believed the poor animal was dead. My brother quietly carried the little fat carcass down to the shore wall ; and threw it over on to the beach close to

the small wicket-gate which opened out from Miss Bradley's grounds to the river. We felt very sorry; but it was a pure accident; and we thought it better for the dog to be found on the shore, than shaken to death at the lady's front door. A day or two after, my brother met Miss Bradley on the Woodside ferry-boat. He knew her very well; and she at once told him a piteous tale about her poor little "Fido's" being found nearly dead on the shore. My brother was relieved to hear the dog was still alive; but had great difficulty in keeping his countenance. "Fido" must have either fallen into the water; or the tide had come up and revived him; but insufficiently high to wash the body of the poor little animal away. However, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise;" so Miss Bradley remained unenlightened.

Close to Holy Trinity Church was a piece of land set apart by a speculative gentleman; resident at that time in the neighbourhood of Parkfield. His intention was to build some pretty little houses in the form of a crescent, with a circular drive; and in the centre to plant

a number of evergreens and shrubs of various kinds. A brick wall was built around a portion of the property. However, just before the completion of the crescent, the projector left the town; and the property remained unfinished for some time. When last I walked in that direction, I saw a few small trees, the wall, and even some of the old shrubs in the midst of workmen's houses now built around the crescent.

One of my brothers and I were out one day with our guns; when, on passing this little shrubbery, our spaniel ran under the bushes and out came a hare. My brother fired; and as the hare ran she dropped one of her hind legs; which was evidently broken. However, she got too far off for a second shot; and our little dog was not fast enough to catch her even on three legs. Some weeks after, we found the hare in the same place; but strong and well, and the leg healed up. This time she was too sharp for us to get a shot at her. A few more weeks passed by; and we went on the same excursion. Out came the hare; and my brother fired and killed her. She was a fine hare; but too old

for anything but juggling. A teeming population now lives where hares and rabbits formerly ran about.

In the summer, we almost lived on the river. One of our favourite sails was to the Burbo Bank and round the Crosby lightship. Trawling for shrimps, we had some fine hauls; and thoroughly enjoyed the sport. My father was determined we should run no unnecessary risk; so we always had one or two steady boatmen with us. We used to go down on the ebb, and return on the flood. During stormy weather, we were forbidden to go on the river. In my boyhood, there was no risk of accident through passing steamers, there being, indeed, very few afloat.

At intervals during the winter season, a dance was given at my father's house; and very busy my dear mother was. One great difficulty was to find beds for the Liverpool guests; who outnumbered all others. The last ferry-boat then sailed from the Cheshire side at ten. Sometimes my father would hire a special steamer to leave between two and three in the morning: the cost of this boat was a guinea. Occasional beds

were requisitioned from neighbours and the nearest hotels. There was a great stir in the village and much enjoyment.

An amusing incident happened at one of these dances. The dining-room was used as a ballroom. It was then fashionable for ladies to carry fastened to their wrists a small silk or satin bag, in which was kept a pocket-handkerchief. During a dance, an elderly maiden lady placed her bag on the large black marble chimneypiece. Will Brancker was dancing with one of my sisters. He remarked: "Do you see that bag?" "Yes," she answered, "it looks very bulky; Miss Innes has just put it there." Will Brancker said: "I know what is in it. I saw her filling it with cakes at the table." After the dance, Will Brancker sauntered up to the chimneypiece; and, negligently placing his elbow on the bag, literally ground up the contents: the butter or whatever had been used in making the cakes oozed through the bag and utterly spoilt it.

A kind friend to me when I was a boy at Fawcett & Preston's was Dick Williams, now Alderman Williams; a man of no ordinary

talent. He was much esteemed by everyone engaged in Fawcett's Engineering Works. Some years ago, he went to reside at Wednesbury; of which busy place he was lately mayor. Brunswick House, his residence, is well known; and its hospitality much appreciated. He is a dear old friend, with whom I maintain a regular correspondence. I trust he may long be spared.

One of the early residents in Birkenhead was old Greenwood, the Quaker. Late one evening, on returning home, he passed over the plank from the steamer to the landing-slip; where at dark there was always an iron basket of coals burning brightly to light passengers up the slip to the pay gates. However, on this particular occasion, old Greenwood, instead of turning to the right, inadvertently took the wrong turn; and tumbled into the shallow water and mud on the south side of the slip. Although taken by surprise, Greenwood didn't cry out; so another man following closely on his heels was soon in the same plight. The new victim at once shouted lustily for help; on which old Greenwood, who was quite a character, muttered:

“Thou fool: why didst thou shout? If thou hadst only kept quiet, we should soon have had the whole boat-load in the same state as ourselves; and none would have been left to laugh at us.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir William Stanley, Bart., and W. B. Aspinall—"Poulton Brook : a Bumper"—Aspinall's Gorse—Early Park-Garden Scheme—Arrowe Park Meet—The "Bagged" Fox—Storeton Steeple-chase—Accident to a Fine Hunter—Storeton Quarries—An Interesting Wager—Mr. Brown, of Grange Farm—The Race that "Didn't Come Off"—Mr. Jackson, of Noctorum—The Noctorum Meet—Sir William Stanley and Louis Napoleon—My Brother's Wager—The *coup d'état*.

ON the death of Sir Thomas Stanley, his son, William, succeeded to the title and the estates. When Sir William removed his stud of hunters from Melton Mowbray to Hooton, he found that his horses, heavy-weight carriers (Sir William rode at fifteen stone), were quite unfit to cross the Wirral country, with its big rotten cops, stiff hedges, and broad, deep ditches. Used to Leicestershire, where the fences are smaller and altogether more negotiable for flying jumps, the Melton horses, when they first came to Wirral, made some heavy

mistakes ; and frequently came to grief. They had to be practised over and over again on off days across the country in the mid-Wirral district. However, Sir William renewed his stables with clever Irish horses.

One hunting-day, the hounds were in Poulton Woods, near Bromboro'. A rather wide brook, with rotten and muddy banks, runs through the valley. Here, horses frequently fell ; and few men ever ventured to jump the brook. A number of hunting-men reached the stream ; which the fox had crossed, followed by the hounds. Sir William Stanley was amongst them ; and not liking to risk the jump, called out : " I will give anyone half a crown who will ride my horse over, and I will cross on the plank bridge." (So-called ; it consisted of but one board.) My brother, William, a fearless rider, said : " I will ride your horse over, Sir William ;" jumped off his horse ; mounted Sir William's ; and cleared the brook splendidly. Sir William remounted, saying : " Thank you, Will Aspinall ; here is the half-crown." Will put it in his pocket, saying quietly to Sir William : " I will give the half-crown to my mother for her Provident Society." Some of the

hunting-men expressed surprise at my brother's taking the money. It seemed shabby. However, in the course of a few weeks, a small box arrived, addressed to W. B. Aspinall. It contained a very handsome, solid silver hunting-flask, from a London silversmith, inscribed: "Poulton Brook: a bumper. Presented to William Bolton Aspinall, Esq., by Sir William Massey Stanley, Bart., Hooton, in remembrance of the Brook jump." Will was very proud of the gift; and the next hunting-day he offered a drink out of it to some of the men who had rather ridiculed him.

At one time, Birkenhead and district abounded with game, hares, partridges, and rabbits. Cloughton Gillbrook was closely preserved. William Knowles, head gamekeeper to Francis Richard Price, lived in a small house near St. Aidan's College. A gorse cover, famous for foxes, was known as Aspinall's Gorse. Some of the old gorse still thrives in the hollow and spare land north-east of the college buildings. I well remember William Knowles; as he regularly came to my father's house for orders as to earth-stopping and other matters. F. R. Price named the gorse

after my father ; and placed the cover in his care, with strict injunctions to William Knowles to preserve it for foxes.

In my youth, Bidston Hill Wood and cover, Noctorum, Aspinall's Gorse, and Gillbrook Woods were complete nurseries for foxes. I may say the same of Oxton, Prenton, and Storeton Woods. Birkenhead, in the chapelry of Bidston, was then a small riverside hamlet, with few residents, mostly brickmakers and fishermen.

The Gillbrook property was purchased by a small syndicate : Sir John Tobin, a wealthy Liverpool merchant ; the first William Laird (a gentleman in every walk of life) ; and Joseph Robinson Pim. Their intention was to make the property into a sort of dingle or park-garden, with land allotted for building residential houses. A stream of water ran through the grounds from Bidston and Flaybrick Hill to the Wallasey Pool. Walks were laid out ; hillocks formed ; and trees planted. Two substantial stone lodges were built : one called Sir John Tobin's lodge ; the other, Pim's lodge ; but the project was knocked on the head when, in 1844, the Birkenhead Park scheme became a great reality ; and a Dock

Company was formed to convert the Wallasey Pool into extensive docks.

I remember the Arrowe property being laid out; and the Hall built by Mr. Shaw, a wealthy warehouse owner in Liverpool. He left the estate to his nephew, John Ralph Shaw, commonly called Nicholson Shaw, as the uncle made it a condition that the heir should assume his name. John Ralph Shaw married a very pretty woman, Miss Cruttenden, of Macclesfield. He was devoted to shooting; but I never remember seeing him on horseback. He closely preserved the estate (about 1000 acres); and planted near the Hall a large and warm pheasantry, with plenty of shelter and good lying. Unfortunately, he made a mistake common to many country gentlemen who favour the strict preservation of game. Believing he could not have foxes as well as pheasants, Squire Shaw did not hesitate to say he would trap or shoot any foxes on his estate. This made him very unpopular. Sir William Stanley, who had just come into the Hooton property, spoke to my father; who wrote young Shaw (as he called him) a strong, friendly letter; advising him to discon-

tinue the destruction of foxes—a practice derogatory to the dignity of a land-owner in a fox-hunting country. Squire Shaw replied in an equally friendly spirit; said he would destroy no more foxes; and asked my father to request Sir William Stanley to fix a meet at Arrowe Park on an early day. This was done. Mr. Shaw gave the hunt a breakfast; and Sir William and his friends came to it. The breakfast was laid on the billiard-table, then in the hall. The principal dish was a large tureen of jugged hare. I can almost taste it now. The hounds drew the Arrowe Woods; and found a fox in a small cover. He only ran about a mile; and was then killed. It was said Mr. Shaw had turned a “bagged” fox into the cover an hour or so before the meet. However, the squire preserved foxes until the Hooton fox-hounds were given up. Of course, when there are no fox-hounds hunting a country, game-keepers destroy foxes; as they are only vermin, and very destructive to poultry and game.

Wirral will never have fox-hounds again. The Peninsula is being gradually built over; and, before many years, will be traversed by a network of tramway lines.

Soon after Sir William Stanley came into residence at Hooton Hall, he arranged an annual steeplechase at Storeton, a three-mile course, starting from near the windmill on a direct line towards Barnston, and back—a beautiful, natural course, with a splendid view from the hill. The race was for horses owned and ridden by gentlemen who hunted with the Hooton foxhounds. Large numbers of people, coming from Liverpool, Chester, and all over the country, attended the meetings. The fences were rather stiff, with big ditches; but all fair hunting-jumps. There were no “made” fences. Only one accident occurred that I remember; and that was to a beautiful horse, called “Challenger,” a perfect hunter up to fifteen or sixteen stone across any country. He fell and broke his leg. His owner, George Hargreaves, of Liverpool, declined to shoot him; although it is notorious that a horse cannot be cured of a broken leg. There have been cases where the bone has united after a fracture; but the animal has always been useless. “Challenger” was taken in a low cart to John Ellis, veterinary surgeon, Liverpool; the bone was set; and the horse “slung.” In six months,

the bone united ; but the poor horse was reduced to a skeleton, and was never fit for work again.

Storeton has long been famous for its stone quarries. The property belonged to the Stanleys ; and brought in a handsome revenue.

An interesting wager was decided in the meadows below Bidston Woods. William Macdonough and Alan Macdonough, nice fellows, and thorough sportsmen, desiring a winter's hunting in Wirral and Cheshire, stopped at the Monks' Ferry Hotel. Whether after hounds or steeplechasing, they were grand riders across country ; and, I believe, they ran horses and won the Grand National. William owned a beautiful little bay horse, with black points, nearly thoroughbred, and a perfect hunter. He had evidently been practised over stone walls in Ireland. One hunting-day, his owner said he believed the little bay would jump a six-foot wall. George Blake, a Liverpool hunting-man, called out : " I will bet you one hundred guineas he cannot." " Done," said Will Macdonough ; " and I will ride him." A day was fixed ; and a wall specially built in a grass field. The



A SIX-FOOT WALL JUMP AT BIDSTON.—*Page 82.*

little bay cantered up; and flew over the wall sideways, simply touching the top with his hind hoofs. The crowd were delighted; and cheered loudly. Will Macdonough then offered to build the wall six inches higher, *i.e.* 6 ft. 6 in.; and ride over it; but no one responded. This grand little horse was sold for a large sum.

Many fine types of the old English farmer were to be found in the hundred of Wirral. Most of them took a warm interest in fox-hunting. Mr. Brown, of the Grange Farm, West Kirby, was very hospitable; and well-liked by all who knew him. He always had a fox in the Grange gorse; and a loaf, a Cheshire cheese, and a good glass of ale for the members of the hunt who called upon him. His eldest son, John, was a fine horseman. I once saw him negotiate a high stone wall which surrounded the yard and field adjoining the house. His clever horse jumped the wall in grand style; and alighted on his legs on the other side; a heavy drop into the road. John Brown was the leading man with the hounds that day from Grange to Caldy; and for the remainder of the run. Mrs. Brown

and the other members of the family were much respected.

In 1841, my father's friends, John and William Hind, had a fine chestnut mare; which they hunted alternately with the Hooton hounds. They backed her against a clever little hunter which belonged to a young Liverpool man, Will Reddish, to race a match over the Storeton steeplechase course for £100. The money was deposited; and my father gave his consent to my riding the mare, at which I was much delighted. She was in grand condition; and fit to go over any country. Her owners were confident as to the result. However, the spectators were disappointed; in fact, we all were. Although we waited hours for them, Will Reddish and his horse never turned up. I was in my usual hunting-clothes; booted and spurred, and in high spirits; when the judge declared the race must be a "walk over," and the stakes paid to the owners of the chestnut mare.

That grand old sportsman, Mr. Jackson, of Noctorum, had a splendid fox cover; and delighted to see the Hooton pack drawing his gorse. His hospitality was extended to the

whole field. Mr. Jackson was locally celebrated for his ginger wine; which he made himself; and kept for many months before using. Whenever my father emptied a sherry cask, it was forwarded to Mr. Jackson to brew his ginger wine in; as the sherry flavour improved the quality.

Louis Napoleon was a friend of Sir William Stanley's. The friendship ripened during the Prince's refugee days in England. One winter, he visited Hooton Hall during the hunting season; and was with the hounds at Noctorum, in company with Lord Maidstone, Lord Chesterfield, and other noblemen. While in the farmyard waiting for the gorse to be drawn, my father called out to Mr. Jackson: "It is very cold this morning; and you have perhaps the most distinguished company ever assembled at a Wirral farmhouse; will you let us have some of your famous ginger wine?" Mr. Jackson was delighted. Jugs and goblets were quickly handed round, filled with the straw-coloured cordial; and all drank to the health of the Noctorum host.

My brother, Joseph, laughingly predicted,

that, as Louis Napoleon was the only Frenchman he knew who could really ride well with fox-hounds, the exile would one day become Emperor of the French. The well-known sporting editor of the *Liverpool Journal* was out with the hounds; and, overhearing my brother's remark, made him a bet of twenty years' annual subscription to the *Journal* that Louis Napoleon would never attain so exalted a position. The wager was registered; and in due time my brother won.

Europe will not soon forget the *coup d'état*, by which, in 1851, Louis Napoleon proclaimed himself Prince President of the French Republic. This achieved, his goal was soon reached. The President became Emperor; Louis Napoleon was Napoleon the Third. By the biting irony of destiny, the refugee, who, in 1848, was sworn in as a special constable to protect plutocratic London against British workmen, had, within a few years, drenched his own capital in blood; and in 1852 was a standing menace to Europe. The downfall of Lord Palmerston, due to his injudicious approval of Louis Napoleon's actions, together

with the sudden rise of the Volunteer movement, through English mistrust of her quondam guest: these mark the more immediate effects of the *coup d'état* on our own history.

CHAPTER IX.

Birkenhead as a Coaching Centre—The “Hirondelle” and the “Hibernia”—My Father and the Railway—The Courts—The First Birkenhead Railway Station—Birkenhead Market as a Town Station—A Big Railway Scheme—The Open Cutting through Birkenhead—Royal Mail Coaches—The Stage-Coachman and the Railway Guard—The Old Stage-Coachmen—At Dr. Rowley’s, Bridgnorth—An Exciting Coach Race—The Old Roadside Inns—The Turnpike Roads in the Coaching Days—Telford’s Menai Bridge—His Anxiety—Accident to the “Hirondelle”—The “Umpire”—Mr. Bretherton and Mr. Clare—Economic Effects of the Railway System.

EARLY Birkenhead was a great coaching centre; as also were Rock Ferry, Eastham, and Chester. A regular service of mail coaches, running to and from North Wales and the Midland counties, was maintained. Handsome four-horse coaches regularly left Woodside Ferry Hotel and the old Birkenhead Ferry Hotel. Small two-horse coaches also ran between Birkenhead and Chester, calling at many Wirral villages *en route*.

The traffic for those days was really wonderful. Two special coaches, splendidly equipped, the "Hirondelle" and the "Hibernia," ran in opposition; and raced from Birkenhead to Cheltenham; a distance of 120 miles, in about twelve hours. This was delightful travelling.

The first railway built in Birkenhead and Wirral was opened in 1840. My father rather opposed a railway through to Chester; as he said it would spoil the fox-hunting. This prediction was not verified; as the railway was a convenience which enabled us to rail our horses to the distant meets; and, if we wished, it became possible to have a day with the finest pack of hounds in England — the Cheshire hounds. Such runs and such gallops we used to have across the flat country through the vale of Cheshire! They recall the happiest days of one's life.

The idea sometimes prevails that one cannot have foxes as well as pheasants. This is a mistake. A good gamekeeper, in a hunting country, can have both. A fox prefers rabbits to pheasants, and poultry to game. I remember an old Cheshire hunting friend of mine, John

Court, was very strong on this point. His keeper would have it that the foxes destroyed the pheasants. Mr. Court expressed his mind freely; and finally wound up emphatically: "I must have foxes, and pheasants, too; otherwise you must look out for another place." All honour to that grand old Cheshire family, the Courts; whose covers were never known to be drawn blank. I see them now; William, at the Manor House; John, at the Rookery. Oh that such men could live on this globe for ever!

"Since one gallant fox more pleasure will bring,
 Than twice twenty thousand cock pheasants on wing;
 We'll drink to the man, whatsoe'er be his rank,
 Whose heart heaves a sigh when his gorse is drawn blank."

The first Birkenhead railway station was in Grange Road, almost on the site of the present town station. At the time, no extension was thought of; but some years after, a tunnel was made from Grange Road to Monks' Ferry. Comparatively recently, a second tunnel was opened connecting the original station at Grange Road with Woodside Ferry; where a fine new station was built by the committee of the London and North-Western and Great Western

Joint Railways, the lessors of the line to Chester. The companies wanted to run their station down to the river wall ; but the ferry committee opposed this ; as the river frontage belonged to the Birkenhead Commissioners. However, we made satisfactory arrangements for carrying the passengers and goods across the river by our ferry-steamers. When an extension into the town was contemplated, I endeavoured to induce my fellow-commissioners to offer the market to the railway companies for a town station. The levels were all right ; and it seemed to me that we might make a profitable bargain. However, my colleagues thought otherwise ; as they contended we needed a retail market. My idea, on the contrary, was to encourage the various tradesmen to settle in shops ; and thus encourage ratepayers. I have often regretted my ideas were not adopted ; as the site is just the place for a town station ; and the market has not been a profitable property for the town. It looks desolate except on Saturdays. The first tunnel to Monks' Ferry, though practically disused, could not be closed ; as the railway companies were under perpetual covenant to carry goods,

iron, and other material to Monks' Ferry; and thence through a short tunnel into Lairds' Works.

As the docks progressed, it was thought advisable to make a branch line from the main Birkenhead and Chester Railway through the town, with a terminus at the docks. This line was mainly intended for carrying coal and other goods to be loaded or discharged at the docks; though the promoters also contemplated making a short cut to Manchester in connection therewith. A company was formed, called the Birkenhead, Lancashire, and Cheshire Junction Railway Company, for the purpose of merging the whole of the railway system into one great line; to consist of the main Birkenhead line as far as Ledsham, near Hooton; thence across the country to Ellesmere Port, Chester, Frodsham, and Warrington; and on to a terminus in Manchester. The title of the company indicates the intention of the promoters. It was thought the scheme had a great future before it; more especially as it would bring Birkenhead into intimate contact with the great city of Manchester. Many Manchester men took shares in the company. One great mistake of the pro-

moters was to open a cutting through Birkenhead. This not only spoilt much of the land; but was a great nuisance into the bargain; and is so to this day; as it disfigures the appearance of the fine, broad streets and thoroughfares *en route*. The town commissioners ought never to have sanctioned it. Though condemned when first projected, influence, outside and inside, completely overcame all opposition. Apparently conflicting interests were, in reality, identical. Some of the leading promoters were at once railway directors, commissioners of Birkenhead, and land-owners on the route between Grange Road and the docks. Needless to say, the land realised enormous prices. When the facts of the case became known, a great storm of indignation was raised. But it was too late. The work had gone too far; and the evil remains to-day; a witness to the corruption so frequently the curse of public bodies.

Few now remember the rather primitive method by which the old passenger service between Lime Street and Edge Hill was worked. The trains were hauled to and fro by means of an endless rope. The machinery was supplied

and fitted by an eminent firm of Liverpool engineers ; and consisted of a pair of beautifully constructed steam-engines, placed under cover at Edge Hill ; while the rope travelled in a sort of channel or open way between the rails. With this system, the traffic was safely and uninterruptedly carried on for many years ; until the increasing trade demanded greater power in order to ensure the speedier despatch of trains. The closed tunnel, which was dreadfully stuffy and always full of smoke, remained for a long period ; and was then converted into what is practically an open cutting.

The old roadside inns in Bromboro' and Sutton used to be well-known stopping-places for travellers. Coaches changed horses at Sutton Half-way House, between Chester and Birkenhead. The usual stage run when horses were changed was from seven to ten miles, according to the condition of the roads. In the fast coaches, the horses frequently galloped, especially the opposition racing coaches. Most of the teams were highly bred horses. There were trotting teams and galloping teams. The pace was always good ; and accidents were very rare.

Each coach had its guard; and the Royal mail coaches, coachman and guard, dressed in scarlet coats and white hats. On entering and leaving a town or village, the guards always played the favourite tunes of the day on the cornopean. On night journeys, the Royal mail coach guards were armed with pistols.

Shortly after railways became general, a conversation between a railway guard and an old stage-coachman was overheard. The discussion fell on the comparative safety of the two modes of travelling. Finally, the old coachman wound up a heated harangue as follows: "Suppose my coach upsets, why, there y' ar'. But if your engine runs off the line and upsets the carriages, where are ye?" Such an argument could not be met.

The old stage-coachmen were held by the travelling public in great respect. The work was hard, but most invigorating; while the drivers and guards of the leading coaches were a superior class of men. Connected with the "Hirondelle," Jordan, of Shrewsbury, and Leake, of Wem, were giant coachmen. Splendid drivers, indeed! The three noted coachmen in Birkenhead district

were old Herbert, Henry Herbert, his son, and Matthews. The last named was killed by the falling of a bridge at Chester. It was a new bridge at the Roodee for carrying the Great Western Railway over the river. Matthews' coach had just been placed on the road for North Wales; and his passengers were carried by the Birkenhead and Chester, and the Chester and Shrewsbury Railway to Llangollen Road station; where the coach met them, and continued the journey through North Wales. The bridge had not long been completed. It was built on cast-iron girders; a principle never since adopted; wrought-iron is always now used. The train had only passed a few yards on to the bridge, when the girders broke; and down fell the train into the river. Many passengers were injured, and several killed; amongst the latter was poor Matthews, the coachman. I saw the wreck a few days after the accident; and a sad sight it was.

I was educated at Dr. Rowley's, Bridgnorth, —in its day one of the best schools in England. Lord Lingen and Bishop Fraser were head boys when I was a junior.

Well I remember on one occasion returning from school through Wrexham. The "Hirondelle" changed horses at the Wynnstay Arms Hotel. We had been racing with the "Hibernia" from Shrewsbury. There were only a few minutes between us. Our fresh horses were ready waiting at the hotel door. Almost before the coach stopped, our traces were loosed; horses changed; and, in less than two minutes, we were off on our way through Rossett to Chester. All that distance we galloped, the "Hibernia" close behind. We ran into Chester. In two minutes, we were off again. We stopped at the White Lion to change horses; while the "Hibernia" changed at the Albion. We galloped to Backford. The coachman thought he had a few minutes to spare; so we asked for refreshments. Before we could get them, a shout was raised that the "Hibernia" was coming. Our coachman at once drew across the road, the leading horses' heads in one hedge, and the back of the coach in the other. The opposition could not pass. Such a volley of abuse and loud language! Peace was eventually restored by drinks all round.

The old roadside inns where the coaches changed horses were very comfortable places ; and well patronised : hosts and hostesses hearty and hospitable, civil and attentive : eatables and drinkables best quality. Never elsewhere was there such food : at least, so one loves to think. The racing opposition coaches changed horses so rapidly that little time was given for refreshments. Often, trays were handed up to the passengers ; who retained their seats, eating and drinking under difficulties ; though I have enjoyed many a good feed when the coachman, not having to hurry, gave us ten or fifteen minutes for dinner ; everything good and substantial ready on the table waiting for the arrival of the coach. Nowadays, we hurry into a refreshment room ; scramble for eatables and drinkables ; when half-way through, the porters shout out : " train going, gentlemen ; " and back we have to run. However, the dining and luncheon cars on the leading long-distance trains are certainly a step in the right direction.

Those grand old days ! gone now, alas ! for ever. Incidents flood the mind ! None but those who had the pleasure of passing through the country in the old way can appreciate the

loss. The present generation know nothing of it; and never can!

The roads were in perfect condition; as every loose stone was picked up. The turnpike trustees had men stationed at the turnpikes, each responsible for a certain section of the roads being kept in perfect order. Turnpike roads were then macadamised in strict accordance with the intention of the inventor: the principle was that each stone should be broken to such a size as would pass through a two-inch ring. This ensured a binding together when laid down; and a surface was left as smooth as a flag. Nowadays, many roads are spoiled by the careless way in which the stones are broken. A really good Macadam road is the finest description of highway.

Telford's turnpike road, between Shrewsbury and Holyhead, *via* Chester, used to be considered the finest in the world. The Menai Suspension Bridge was built in connection with this road; and, to this day, it is one of the most elegant structures to be found. I have heard that, when the first chain was being passed across the Straits, Telford was in such a state of mental excitement, lest any hitch should occur, that he sat

in a little cottage on the shore with a loaded pistol before him, to be used in the event of failure. Happily, success crowned his efforts; and placed Telford in the front rank of engineers.

One night, a sad accident occurred at the corner of a street, now the site of Lairds' offices, close to the ferry. In turning the corner, a sharp one, the "Hirondelle" was upset; and several passengers were thrown against the iron railings. Some were very much hurt; but all eventually recovered. This was the only accident I ever heard of connected with the "Hirondelle."

The most notable coach in Wirral was old Herbert's "Umpire," a light pair-horse coach, which ran between Birkenhead and Chester, *viâ* Bebington, Bromboro', Eastham village, and Sutton; leaving Woodside Hotel at 10 A.M.; arriving in Chester at 12 noon; returning at 5 P.M.; and arriving at Woodside at 7 P.M.. This was good travelling, eight miles an hour: horses were changed at Sutton each way. Old Herbert's son, Henry, had a four-horse coach which ran to Shrewsbury: horses were changed every seven to ten miles.

Mr. Bretherton, a well-known coach pro-

prietor, built a handsome Catholic chapel outside Liverpool. One day, a gentleman, Mr. Clare, was driving towards Warrington; and as he passed the chapel he saw Mr. Bretherton in the yard engaged with some workmen. Mr. Clare pulled up. "Good morning, Mr. Bretherton." "Good morning, Mr. Clare." "You seem very busy." "Yes. I am superintending the building of a mausoleum where my old bones may rest until I hear the last trump sound." "Oh!" said Mr. Clare: "I don't think that will disturb you much. You will only think it is the old 'Umpire' blowing its horn!"

The coaching system had arrived at perfection some years before the railway era. I remember the sad prognostications that the services of the old coachmen and guards would no longer be required; that the demand for horses would cease; that graziers and horse-dealers would find their occupations gone: that, in short, no one could foresee the limits of the evil change. Here, once more, we see the unwisdom of prophesying before the event! True, the coaches were gradually taken off the road; and, as the railway system developed, the public took advantage of the

quicker means of transit : but the new travelling facilities caused an enormous increase in traffic ; and a much greater demand for cabs, omnibuses, and waggons, all of which required horse haulage ; while the demand for drivers, railway guards, porters, and other railway servants, offered new openings for employment ; gave a fresh impetus to trade ; and brought into being a state of prosperity far beyond the most sanguine expectations.

CHAPTER X.

Early Birkenhead Shops—Mitchell, the Butcher—Kirby, Tailor and Postmaster—Miss Seed, Village Store—Mrs. Cameron, Confectioner—Our Golden-Wedding Cake—Eastwood, Chemist—Chemists' Profits—Sammy Stansfield, Ironmonger—A Cute Saddler—The Ravenscrofts—Ollier, Chemist—Dicky Smith, Chemist—Dr. Smith—William Stevenson—Dr. Frederick Stevenson—The Clovers—William Stevenson and the Stomach-Pump—My Brother, Tobin, and "Bolus"—Alexander Stewart—Dr. Dixon—The Lazarettoes—The Cholera—Sambo and the Marrow-Bone—A Moonlight Adventure.

IN my youth, Birkenhead was very primitive. I remember when there was only one butcher's shop; and that in Tranmere. Mitchell was the butcher's name. He had a two-wheeled, covered cart, in which he hawked butchers' meat every morning. I have heard that his meat was equal to any purchasable from the largest butchers' shops in Liverpool.

Kirby, tailor and draper, whose shop was close to Woodside Ferry, kept the only post

office in Birkenhead for several years. Mr. Kirby was postmaster; and his one man, a working tailor, was postman. I often used to see him in his shop window, cross-legged, plying his needle. In those days, it was considered a good advertisement for a tailor to have the workmen seated in the window. The postman's duties were not arduous. There was only one morning delivery; and that a small one. Mr. Kirby's workman was employed stitching for the remainder of the day.

At the corner, next to Kirby's, was Miss Seed; who kept a small village store. She sold everything, from a ball of string to an ounce of Spanish juice; and was very kind to us children.

Lower down, opposite the ferry gates, was a confectioner's shop. It was the only one in the town for some years. Subsequently, W. Cameron, a joiner and builder, built a shop at the villa residence of Mr. Hanson, in Chester Street, at the corner of Brandon Street. His widow carries on a confectioner's business to this day; but her shop is now in Grange Mount.

Mrs. Cameron's confectionery is excellent, as is well known. She kindly sent my wife a very

beautiful wedding cake on the fiftieth anniversary of our wedding day. At first sight, it would seem rather late in the day to be eating one's own wedding cake; but I can only express the hope that many of my readers may be spared to enjoy the perfect happiness that my wife and I have experienced during the many years we have been permitted to live together.

Eastwood, in Chester Street, was the first chemist. He also sold many articles now supplied by grocers and chandlers. My father used to send me to pay the half-yearly house bill for candles, oil, etc.; which usually amounted to some £40. There was no gas in those days; so Eastwood, who kept the only shop of the kind, did a roaring trade. His old shop still stands; but it is ancient and decayed. Like other property in Chester Street, it should be demolished by the corporation; and modern houses and shops erected on the site.

Old Eastwood was known as an original character. I see him now, standing at his shop door, with his ruddy, clean-shaven face, and white apron. One day, a small boy called; and made some purchases. Eastwood was behind

the counter. The amount to pay was 1s. 1½d. Eastwood handed over the goods. The boy put down what appeared to be one shilling, one penny, and one halfpenny; and then bolted with the parcel. Eastwood examined the coins, and found the shilling was a bad one; so he ran after the boy; but too late. The young rascal had got clear away. Old Eastwood returned to the shop, swearing hard; glanced over the coins again; and was heard to mutter: "Well, it can't be helped. One comfort is, I have made a halfpenny out of the little beggar." After this, he was always chaffed as to the big profits made by chemists.

The first ironmonger's shop was opened by Samuel Stansfield, a Quaker (commonly called "Sammy" Stansfield), at the corner of the road just opposite Woodside Ferry. It is now a public-house. William Hinson, a respected inhabitant of Birkenhead, was in Mr. Stansfield's employ for many years; and doubtless largely contributed to his success. It used jokingly to be said that Sammy was not particular how often he sent in his bill for the same goods.

This reminds me of a story told of a certain

saddler who did a large and flourishing business. One day, he was absent from his shop for several hours; so his workmen went to their dinner, and left only a boy in charge. On the saddler's return, the boy told him that a gentleman had driven up and had taken a new saddle and a bridle away with him. He had given his name; but the boy had forgotten it; and did not remember having seen the gentleman before. The saddler, equal to the emergency, at once gave instructions for a saddle and a bridle to be charged up against every customer on his books. This was done; the accounts were duly rendered; and the tale goes that a large percentage of the customers paid their bills without question; so that the saddle and the bridle were paid for, not once, but many times over.

Little Ollier opened the next chemist's shop at the corner of Chester Street and Ivy Street. It is now a public-house. Subsequently, Dicky Smith opened a chemist's shop at the corner of Bridge Street and Hamilton Street. After Dicky Smith, Mr. Jones, one of Birkenhead's most respected townsmen, carried on the shop successfully for many years. He died while in the

business; and was greatly lamented. The shop is now kept by Mr. James.

Dicky Smith's brother, Doctor Smith, father of Jerome Smith, a Wirral resident, was for many years an eminent surgeon practising in Birkenhead. He was perhaps the best dressed man in the town. I knew him well; and remember his marrying a charming lady. He was a most agreeable man; and was known as the dapper little doctor.

The first medical man to settle in Birkenhead was William Stevenson. He was a stranger; so for some time his practice was but small. He frequently dined at my father's; where a knife and fork were always ready for him. My father and mother had the most implicit confidence in his skill; which was well deserved. He attended our family up to and for many years after my father's death. Mr. Stevenson married Miss Roberts, a local lady. She died when her last baby was born; and left three sons and one daughter. My mother was very grieved at Mrs. Stevenson's death; and she brought the baby home; and was a mother to her. The second son, Dr. Frederick Stevenson,

was for many years the leading physician in Birkenhead. He was a clever surgeon; a skilful medical man; and the head of the Borough Hospital. His death was a distinct loss to the town. His widow, kind to the poor, and beloved by all who knew her, resided in Hamilton Square. She was a daughter of George Clover's, and a sister of Robert Clover's. The recent death of George Clover, a citizen greatly esteemed and much regretted, leaves a great blank in the Clover family. His widow, a most amiable lady, resides at Manor Hill, Claughton.

A sad, though a somewhat ludicrous, incident occurred at Wallasey sandhills, in which old William Stevenson played a prominent part. A vessel was wrecked on the shore between Wallasey and Leasowe. She was bound for Liverpool from the West Indies; and her cargo consisted for the most part of rum in casks. One of these was washed ashore and broached by the fishermen. By imbibing too freely, one man became unconscious; and was believed to be dying. A messenger was despatched on horseback for William Stevenson, the nearest medical man. He immediately ran to my mother (who

purchased nearly every new medical or domestic appliance) to borrow from her a brass stomach-pump; a costly instrument, all complete in a handsome mahogany case. William Stevenson, without waiting for any instructions as to working the pump, hurried off to Wallasey; and at once ordered a bucket of clean, cold water. In this, he placed the suction pipe; while the discharge pipe he carefully passed down the patient's throat as far as it would go. Stevenson's crude method was to force as much water as possible into the poor fellow's stomach; and then to pump it out. Under this heroic treatment, the man naturally succumbed. So much water, with high pressure, made the remedy infinitely worse than the disease. After this, the stomach-pump was looked upon as a dangerous instrument.

William Stevenson walked his rounds for several years; but, as his practice grew, my father bought and presented him with a cob horse, dark cream coloured; which he called "Bolus." Then followed a gig soon after. My mother and some lady friends presented him with a brougham; the use of which he declared always caused him to take cold, whereas the open gig hardened

him. On the other hand, cold, wet weather, and exposure to damp, made his presence rather chilling in a sick-room: at least, such was the ladies' opinion. We youngsters hated the sight of William Stevenson; and feared to tell our mother if we felt unwell; for she always sent for him; and he physicked us with the most abominable mixtures.

Alexander Stewart, chemist, Birkenhead, was for many years William Stevenson's dispenser. He was very kind to us boys; and sometimes allowed us to go into the surgery; where he made us effervescing drinks; and very good they were. One day, William Stevenson caught us all; and a pretty row there was. We never dare go again; as he was very cross, and threatened to thrash us. I remember William Stevenson was frequently called out of church in the middle of the service; which, it was said, was done to make people think he had a large practice!

My brother, Tobin, once borrowed "Bolus" for a day's hunting with Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton hounds. The meet was Storeton. Tobin had put on a pair of spurs; in those

days, short, sharp spikes fitted into the heels. He had never before ridden with spurs ; and instead of turning his toes in, he turned them out. Consequently, the spurs gored the poor horse's sides to such an extent that he galloped all the way home to the stable in Priory Street. William Stevenson was very angry ; and never again did any of us dare to ask for a ride on " Bolus."

There may be some who have never heard of the lazarettoes in the Mersey ; though the present cadet and school and reformatory ships, lying between Rock Ferry and New Ferry, are well-known. For many years, there was a quarantine station in the river. The vessels were old men-of-war, of large size : the wooden walls of old England, set apart by the Admiralty for sanitary purposes. These hospital ships were commodious ; built of English oak ; coppered and copper fastened ; most comfortable ; and well adapted for quarantine purposes. All vessels arriving from foreign ports were compelled to drop anchor soon after entering the river ; more especially those from warm climates, the East and West Indies, Africa, etc. If any

sickness were prevalent at the ports of call, or on board ship during the homeward voyage, the captain was compelled by law to hoist a yellow flag; and to sail up as near as possible to the lazarettoes; there to drop anchor. No communication whatever was permitted with the shore, under pain of heavy penalties, until the medical officer appointed by the authorities had visited the vessel; and had signed a clean bill of health. The law was severe; and a careful watch was kept day and night. For some years, William Stevenson was the medical officer; and his four-oared boat was always ready at the Birkenhead Ferry slip when the signal-man sighted a fresh arrival at the quarantine station.

In 1832, there was a terrible outbreak of cholera in England, the early cases of which were supposed to have been imported. Fear and consternation prevailed in the district. The mortality was great.

Dr. Dixon was the next medical man to settle in the town. He was an exceedingly nice fellow; and greatly esteemed.

In my boyhood, a pretty villa was built by Mr. Ravenscroft; who was engaged in a prosperous

business in Poole Lane, now South Castle Street, Liverpool. He was reputed to have made much money out of successful land speculations in Birkenhead. He also built small property in the town. There is a row of houses in Church Street, called Ravenscroft Row ; which he built, I should think, seventy years ago. He was a little man, unostentatious, and highly respectable. He had four sons ; all of whom died some years' ago. James was drowned in the wreck of the *Arctic*. John spent many years in South America ; came home ; settled in Birkenhead ; and was for some years a popular leader of the Liberal party. He was also chairman of the North and South Wales Bank. William Ravenscroft built a pretty villa in Claughton, called "Lingdale." I remember the young Ravenscrofts well ; but we were not on intimate terms ; as they were brought up very strictly at home ; while my upbringing was precisely opposite.

My father had a young black boy as a sort of outdoor servant. He had come over from the west coast of Africa in one of my father's ships ; and seemed very happy with us. He was a most faithful fellow ; and never grumbled or found fault

with anything he had to do. He was devoted to us boys; and I believe if we had told him to put his head in the fire he would have done it. One day, we played a trick which might have resulted in serious injury to poor Sambo; but, fortunately, beyond upsetting his nerves a bit, he received no injury. Sambo was very fond of firing off cannon and guns; so we made up our minds to scare him. We got a marrow-bone about six or eight inches long; stopped up one end with hard, baked clay; drilled a touch-hole for powder; and then rammed the hollow space with as much powder as it would hold. When this was fixed for firing, with a little powder round the touch-hole, we made a poker red hot; and gave it to Sambo to light the train. The explosion was terrific. Poor Sambo rushed to us, shouting: "Oh! massas, massas, me killed dead!" 'Twas a foolish, practical joke; but, happily, the outcome was not serious. When my father heard of it, I dare not relate what he said or did! We got smartly punished.

In the early days of Birkenhead, Nathan Sewill, an independent gentleman, had a small farm on which he resided, situate at the top

of Holt Hill, near the upper entrance of what is now Clifton Park. Close to his house, was an orchard, which contained some very good apple and pear trees. Very prolific they were; but the boys from the little Tranmere village adjoining would persist in stealing the fruit. The boys, becoming aware that Nathan Sewill had threatened to shoot the first one that he saw robbing the trees, and that he was keeping a strict watch, plotted to hoax him. With this view, they made a Guy Faux, or dummy figure of a boy, dressed in coat and cap; such as might readily in a poor light be mistaken for a living figure. One moonlight night, they got a long string over the top branch of the finest apple tree, then loaded with fruit. To the string, of course, was attached the Guy Faux. A keen look-out was kept; and, before long, Nathan Sewill was discovered keeping watch at a window of the house, armed with his gun. The Guy Faux was in position; so that on the string being pulled it would move slowly up the tree, closely resembling a figure climbing up the branches. A signal was given; the string was pulled; the figure quietly, almost ghost-like, glided up the apple tree; a window was

stealthily opened ; the figure got to the top of the tree ; bang went a gun ; and down with a dull thud fell the Guy Faux. Nathan Sewill, frantic with terror, thinking he had shot a boy, dropped his gun in despair. Scarcely knowing what he did, he ran out into the night, making for the stable, with a vague idea of saddling a horse and getting as far as possible away from the horrid scene. The young rascals in hiding had omitted no detail calculated to give realistic effect. The cry of the murdered boy rang in Nathan's ears as he rushed in his mad fear into the stable. After all, he thought dimly, it was hard for a young life to be sacrificed for the sake of a few miserable apples ! Indeed, the poor old fellow would not willingly hurt a fly. He had only intended to frighten the boy ; and now—his brain reeled ; it could not perform its office ; his one, dull, hopeless feeling was to get away from the hateful spot ; away from the scene of his mad deed with what speed he might. Seizing the first saddle and bridle he could lay his hands on, he fixed them with trembling hands on the nearest horse (as he thought) ; scrambled up ; and rode off into the darkness of the lanes. One who suddenly met

him as he rode into a flood of moonlight mounted on the cow (for it was indeed a cow that Nathan had mistaken for a horse in his fright) drew a ludicrous picture of the disconsolate old fellow. It is hard to say who at first had the bigger fright; the old horseman (or cowman) or the pedestrian. It is no joke on turning the corner of a lane in the small hours of the morning to meet such an apparition. The old man babbled of the murder he had committed; but was at length persuaded to dismount and return home. A search was made; and the Guy Faux discovered. Still, it was hard to convince poor old Sewill that he had not killed someone; and he was never again quite the same man. All the actors in the scene are dead; the orchard is a thing of the past; but the story, as I heard it in my boyhood, is embedded in my memory with a freshness characteristic of impressions made on a youthful mind.

CHAPTER XI.

The Sandbaches—Charles Parker—A Day with Stag-Hounds—Charles Fairclough—"Tommy Donkey"—The Lion Hotel, Warrington—The Worship of Bacchus—Clifton Park—The Happy Valley—My Sister's Watch—The "Eggs and Bacon" House—Covetousness Rewarded—Wheat and Free Trade—Picturesque Windmills—The Warings—Port Sunlight—"The Largest Soap Manufacturer in the World"—W. H. Lever as Member for Birkenhead.

AMONG the leading merchants and ship-owners in Liverpool during the past century were the Sandbaches. The firms of Sandbach, Tinne & Co., Sandbach & Parker, are well known and respected. My father did a considerable business with them; and a personal friendship existed on both sides.

When I was quite a boy, I received an invitation from Charles Parker to go to Aigburth and breakfast with him. He had recently bought a very handsome pony; which he thought would make a good hunter for one of his sons. Mr.

Parker sent his carriage down to the pier-head to meet me. After breakfast, I set out for the neighbourhood of Rainhill; there to ride the pony with Sir John Gerard's stag-hounds. Mr. Parker's coachman, Charles Fairclough, had been in the same position with my father; and a very valuable and trustworthy man in the stables he was. Charles accompanied me on one of Mr. Parker's horses; and a most happy time I spent; for I had never seen stag-hounds before. The only drawback was the stag; which got into the road and never seemed to think of getting out of it. It was a tame one turned out of a cart. We galloped for miles along the turn-pike road. After a pleasant day, we rode back to Aigburth; where I had a good dinner; and was then sent down in a carriage to the pier-head. This little incident put me on very friendly terms with Mr. Parker and his family. They were always most kind and hospitable.

While talking of old times, Charles Fairclough told me an incident which occurred when he was in my father's service. Our stables were in Priory Street, at the end of the garden—a large one, well separated from the house. At the

bottom of Priory Street, then called Priory Lane, was a large pool of water. We had a donkey, called "Tommy Donkey;" and a handsome animal he was. He could trot or gallop at great speed; and never seemed to tire. We children used to have frequent little excursions into the country, taking our own provisions with us; and we always thought the donkey-cart the most delightful vehicle we could have. One day, my brother, Will, was to ride "Tommy"; who was saddled and bridled. Will started down Priory Lane; and when he had gone a little distance, Charles, an active, young fellow, ran and jumped up behind on "Tommy's" back. Down went "Tommy's" head; and off he galloped along the lane until he got to the edge of the pond; then he deliberately stopped; threw up his heels; sent both head first into the water; and afterwards galloped back to the stable. We never knew him misbehave himself like that before. He evidently considered himself grossly insulted by another rider jumping up when one was already on his back.

Early last century, one of the oldest established

and most comfortable hotels in Lancashire was the Lion Hotel, Warrington. This house was much frequented by sportsmen and hunting-men. One popular, but eccentric customer was Captain Stanton ; whose language was not always strictly parliamentary. The captain used to visit the hotel at all hours, day and night ; and often started on nocturnal journeys in one of the comfortable travelling carriages on hire. These carriages were painted a brimstone colour. The proprietor had a stable-man or postillion, known as "Hell-fire Jack" ; whose two favourite horses were called "Thunder" and "Lightning." One night, at a late hour, the captain in a merry mood strolled into the hotel ; and ordered a chaise and a pair of horses to be ready in a few minutes. The landlord asked where he wished to be driven to ; and met with the blunt reply : "to Hell." The stable bell was promptly rung ; "Thunder" and "Lightning" were speedily harnessed to the brimstone - coloured chaise ; and "Hell-fire Jack" was ordered to drive Captain Stanton to his destination.

Some years ago, four well-known gentlemen residing in Claughton, were notorious for their

fondness of a glass of good sherry or fruity port. Not satisfied with the liquor at their own dinner-tables, they were in the habit of making the rounds of their friends. These visits were agreeable enough when not too frequently made ; but, as the number of houses at which they were welcomed was not large, the calls at last became a nuisance ; not to say expensive. The favourite hour was shortly after three, on Sundays ; when the four friends would sit drinking glass after glass until five or even six o'clock ; in fact, until the church bells began to ring for evening service. At last, one gentleman resolved to put a stop to their extraordinary practice. He consulted with his wife, a quiet, thoughtful woman ; who far from approved these Sunday calls. On the Sunday morning of the day on which this worthy couple expected their unwelcome visitors, they arranged that immediately after early dinner everything should be removed from the dining-room ; and, instead of decanters of wine, a tray with tea and coffee should grace the board. When the four gentlemen were shown into the dining-room ; and they saw the tray and its contents,

they declined to partake of "the cup which cheers but not inebriates." Never did they call again: the incident was talked about; and their Sunday visits elsewhere gradually decreased and grew beautifully less.

Few people remember when what is now Clifton Park consisted of green fields, uphill and downhill; while a stream of clear water ran through the middle, finding its source in Oxton, and meandering down to Tranmere, where it emptied itself into the pool, and thence into the river. There was also a large wood, covering several acres. At the west end of the wood was a beautiful valley (known as the pleasant or happy valley), which abounded with wild flowers. The district is now covered with houses and shops; and the Borough Road runs through the midst of it.

Captain Sharp, a retired sailor, bought a quantity of land; and laid it out in streets and building plots. He first erected for himself a fine house at the top of the park, adjoining Holt Hill. Next his residence, he built a lodge, with stone pillars and gates, and he also placed a similar structure at the lower end of the park, now

almost at the south end of Argyle Street. He had brought home from China some beautiful chimney-pieces ; very handsome and very costly. Clifton Park land is now covered with houses, generally well-tenanted. Towards the west, are numerous streets, among them the Woodlands, where a handsome board school has recently been built. Passing up the pleasant valley, was a footpath leading to Tranmere Mill, — for many years occupied by Mr. Lightbound, — and very picturesque it looked.

My father presented my sister, Sophia, with a beautiful gold watch and chain on her birthday. Watches were then watches in every sense of the word ; for in those days the art of imitation had not been thoroughly learnt. We youngsters celebrated the day by going for a long country walk through the wood, along the pleasant valley, past Tranmere Mill, and home again by Holt Hill. On reaching home at dusk, my sister exclaimed : “ Oh ! I have lost my watch ! ” A search was made ; but it was too dark to be effectual. Early next morning, we closely followed the route we had gone the previous day. In the lane leading to the Holt was a small cottage,

covered with ivy; and my sister said she remembered climbing up to get a piece. On this, my brother remarked: "Perhaps the watch is lying underneath those leaves." A brief search revealed both watch and chain uninjured. The discovery made us all very happy; and we agreed not to tell father or mother anything about it.

In my youth, Bidston Hill was a popular resort. In the village below was a licensed inn, of great age; for many years kept by a well-known family, the Radleys; and popularly known as the "Eggs and Bacon" house. It was specially noted for fine hams; which the Radleys cured themselves; and kept carefully preserved from damp until they were in perfect condition. Many a time have we gone there for tea; when ham and eggs, or eggs and bacon, were commonly called for. A Miss Radley married a man named Simon Croft, who occupied the house for many years. However, under his management, the original trade gradually declined; and the place became year by year more of a drinking resort. Eventually, the owner of the village did away with the public-

house; and made it into a private residence. There is now no licensed house on Bidston estate.

A well-known farmer in Wirral was Mr. Radley; who lived in a fine old house on Bidston Hill. When wheat was very scarce, Mr. Radley had a large quantity stored on his premises; but although offered a considerable sum he declined to sell, believing the price would rise. At last the market turned; and wheat began to fall; so Mr. Radley thought it time to sell. However, when he came to thresh his stacks and the store in his barns, he found the bulk of the wheat had been eaten by rats; so he had to face a heavy loss after all. Happily, the price of wheat and flour, thanks to the noble efforts of Cobden and Bright, is now exceedingly moderate. Indeed, very high prices are almost impossible; as practically the whole world sends food-stuffs to England.

The old windmill on Bidston Hill was rented and worked for many years by Mr. Radley's brother. One on Grange Hill, of similar construction, was blown down in a heavy gale;

while the windmill at Saughall has long disappeared. I remember when the whole of the rising ground from the river Mersey was one line of windmills; and most picturesque they looked. Few, alas! now remain. 'Twere a pity to destroy these links with the past; though the certainty of steam-power has rendered them obsolete.

The prevailing wind in Wirral is west-north-west. This largely accounts for the fact that the trees in exposed situations all lean towards the east.

Close to Bebington village, stands a little thatched cottage. In my childhood, it was a farmhouse; kept by the Warings; a kind-hearted couple, hospitable to a degree, loved and respected by all who knew them. Well do I remember the orchard and garden—the gooseberry bushes in particular. During the summer holidays, we children were invited to visit the farm; and I know how we looked forward to the day; for we used to get all the good things imaginable. It was really a gooseberry feast: delicious tea and cream; and plenty of never-to-be-forgotten potato-cakes; well-buttered; and,

when well made, perhaps the daintiest dish which can be placed upon the tea-table. Our great delight was for Mr. Waring to come to Birkenhead for us in his large milk shandry; which had comfortable seats, and always contained plenty of clean straw for us to sit upon; and to take us home again late in the afternoon. The Warings have long passed away; and what was once a charming rural spot is now a largely populated district.

Hard by, is the model village of Port Sunlight: truly a busy human hive. Its founder, William Hesketh Lever, has well earned the reputation of being *the largest soap manufacturer in the world*. When walking through the streets of Port Sunlight, one can hardly realise that comparatively a few years ago it was a veritable nursery for foxes, hares, rabbits, and pheasants. Mr. Lever still resides amongst us; and I venture to say, without fear of contradiction, that neither he nor his good wife lets the right hand know the good that the left is continually doing. Indeed, the name of Lever is fast becoming a household word.

As member for Birkenhead, Mr. Lever would

be invaluable; but, unfortunately, his politics stand in the way. I once had the pleasure of travelling with Mr. and Mrs. Lever to London; when, in course of conversation, I jocularly remarked: "Mr. Lever, why don't you turn Conservative; and come and represent us?" He looked at me very seriously; and answered: "Do you really think it possible, Mr. Aspinall, for me to change my political views? What would you think of me if I did?"

However, putting party politics on one side, the country cannot afford to lose the counsels of men of the rare stamp of Mr. Lever. We are at the parting of the ways. At the present juncture in commercial and imperial affairs, when our fiscal policy, under which such brilliant results, national and individual, have been achieved, has been challenged on high authority; when the great principle of Free Trade is once more to be weighed in the balance: now, more than ever, do we need the presence in Parliament of shrewd, capable, many-sided business men, with ripe and first-hand knowledge of the inner workings of

our vast and complex commercial system ;
men accustomed to appreciate, grapple with,
and overcome the latent, practical difficulties
inherent in the social and economic problems
of the time.

CHAPTER XII.

My Grandfather and his Overdue Vessel—My Uncle's Mule—Mr. Halfpenny—Mr. Cockerill and Billy Green—Mr. Cockerill and Solomon—John Bridge Aspinall—The Author on Politics and Religion—Fish Dinners—John A. F. Aspinall—Clarke Aspinall—Bromboro' Hall—The Mainwarings—The Forwoods—"Velocipede" and the Rusty Blade—My Father's Sad Accident.

MY grandfather, William Aspinall, was a man of powerful physique; and, at times, irritable to a degree. In his day, there were no steamers: all the trade was done with sailing-ships. He was engaged in the African trade; and, in common with other ship-owners, suffered considerable loss owing to the captains' keeping the vessels out; and doing a little coasting trade on their own account. Sometimes a vessel would be away for two or three years; and often not heard of for months together. Ships off the port were signalled by the old semaphore system from Bidston

Hill; where each shipowner had his own pole and flags. The duty of the man in charge was to search the horizon for vessels sailing up the channel. The first semaphore from Liverpool was Bidston Hill; thence on different points of elevation along the Welsh coast to Holyhead. My grandfather had given orders that in the event of the flag of a certain ship being passed on to Liverpool, he was to be sent for, no matter whether it was day or night. This ship had been out for a much longer time than usual; and he was daily expecting her return. At length, a messenger arrived at his residence late one night to say that the vessel was very near the entrance of the river; and would be alongside the Old Dock pier-head within two or three hours. My grandfather got ready; and arrived at the pier just as the ship was coming alongside. As soon as the ship touched the pier, he walked on board; went up to the captain; and asked where he had been for so lengthy and so unreasonable a period. The captain's answer was rather offensive; so my grandfather seized him unceremoniously by the collar; gave him a

tremendous thrashing ; and then went home content. He took the law into his own hands with a vengeance !

My uncle, George Aspinall, was a handsome man, generous and open-hearted. He simply delighted us children when he came across from Edge Hill, where he resided, to spend the day at my father's house. He always brought us nice little presents. One day, he arrived with a fine mule, a set of harness, saddle, bridle, riding and driving-whips, spurs, and a light cart. These were a present for me ; as I was the youngest boy, and his particular favourite. The first thing I did was to get the mule saddled and bridled ; as I wished to have a ride. However, I don't think I had been on his back many minutes before the mule threw up his heels ; jumped ; and sent me flying. I was not hurt ; and when the groom had with some difficulty broken him in, I was able to enjoy some riding ; but he was wicked, uncertain, and highly dangerous (as most mules are) ; and my father finally forbade any of us to ride him.

One morning, a local gentleman of consider-

able means, on arriving at Bebington Station, dropped a halfpenny. He looked for it for some time ; and got the porter to help him ; but without avail. They could not find it. At last, the gentleman gave up the search ; but told the porter to be sure and find the coin and let him have it when next he saw him. The coin was never recovered ; but the loser found a new name ; for the tale got abroad ; and he was afterwards known as Mr. Halfpenny.

Mr. Cockerill, an intimate friend of my father's, an independent man, resident in Birkenhead, fond of hunting, shooting, coursing, and all field sports, was one day tackled by a small local brewer, known as Billy Green. The brewer told Mr. Cockerill he would bring an action against him for libel ; on the ground that Cockerill slandered Green's ale all over Wirral. "You are wrong, Mr. Green," said Cockerill. "I never mention your ale to anyone ; but when out hunting or shooting, and I want a glass of beer, I call at a public-house and inquire whose ale they sell. If they say Green's, I simply pass on to the next inn." Poor old Green said no more.

Mr. and Mrs. Cockerill's sitting was near our family pew in St. Mary's Church, immediately under the pulpit. One Sunday, a sermon was preached in aid of the society for converting the Jews. My father, as warden, usually collected. The collecting-boxes were like long scoops. My father handed the box to Mrs. Cockerill; who placed her coin in it; but on holding it to Mr. Cockerill, he leaned forward and audibly whispered to my father: "No! I lent a little Jew a shilling some weeks ago on the hunting-field; and he has never paid me back. We are square now." My father had some difficulty in keeping his countenance: the incident was so ludicrous. It appears a very decent little fellow, Solomon, from Liverpool, had borrowed a shilling from Cockerill; and had probably forgotten to return it.

John Bridge Aspinall, Q.C., the Recorder of Liverpool, was a well-known man; not only in this district, but throughout the country. He was greatly esteemed in his profession; and highly thought of in his native town of Liverpool. His father was the Rev. James Aspinall,

vicar of St. Luke's Church. John Bridge Aspinall was a staunch Whig; and stuck to his text all through life.

The Branckers and the Aspinalls have long been connected by marriage. James Brancker was well known and esteemed in Liverpool. He also was a Whig.

My father used to say there were two members of the Aspinall and the Brancker families who were a disgrace to their names; simply because they were Whigs. However, this was only prejudice; for so long as a man does his duty his political bias is of no account. It is the same with religion. No man has any right to question another's religion. So long as a man has *character*, why concern ourselves with his religion? With few exceptions, one's religion takes its colour from one's early surroundings. Who can be sure that he, and he alone, possesses all the truth? It appears to me that we are all sailing in one boat; and that most of us have a conscious desire to arrive at the right port in safety. Let us take for our motto, then, that fine saying: "*In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity.*"

John Bridge Aspinall mostly resided in London. He used to write me characteristic notes when I resided at Claughton Hill. "My dear cousin, I am coming down to the Sessions next week. Shall be in Liverpool two or three days. May I come to your house during that time? First, it is very much pleasanter than an hotel; and, secondly, I infinitely prefer your port to that of the London and North-Western Railway Company." He was always a welcome visitor; and made himself thoroughly at home. When in town, I occasionally dined and spent an evening with him. John was a Roman Catholic, as were his children. Mrs. John, a charming woman (Miss Gee, of Liverpool), was a Protestant. One Friday, I took her in to dinner. She said: "Now, cousin Harry, you must sit by me, and dine with me. I always have cutlets or something of that kind: the others dine on fish." I answered: "My dear cousin, it will be a great pleasure to me to sit by you, and to dine with you; but I must ask you to allow me the privilege of a fish dinner; which I consider, at times, to be preferable to a meat dinner; for I do think that

fish nicely cooked, and good fish soup especially, is delicious."

Doubtless some of my readers have dined at the Ship Inn, Greenwich. Most excellent dinners used to be served at that noted house. One dinner, in particular, I shall never forget. Some London friends invited me to a fish dinner; and it was a dinner and no mistake. Delightful fish soups; and the choicest of fish. The inn was celebrated for stewed eels. These were delicious; and the whitebait simply superb. Indeed, the clever manipulations of the cuisine seemed endless. We had a most appetising dinner; a thoroughly enjoyable evening; and a pleasant return journey to London by the river shortly before midnight. I often wonder whether such repasts are still enjoyed; the quality and flavour as good; the friends as cordial and warm-hearted. I, alas! am the only survivor of the party.

John Bridge Aspinall died before he was an old man, honoured and beloved. His son, John A. F. Aspinall, is an engineer; and an authority in his profession; especially on locomotive engines. He was for some years chief engineer of the

Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company; and had entire control of their fine engineering works at Horwich; where some thousands of men are employed. Recently, the directors, recognising his great engineering abilities and comprehensive knowledge of railway work, offered him the appointment of general manager; which he accepted. John A. F. Aspinall resides at Mossley Hill; and I trust may long be spared to follow up successfully the responsible work in which he is engaged. His good wife is much beloved.

Here I must refer to the Recorder's brother, Clarke Aspinall; who spent years of his life, I may say, the best years, in working for the public good, and the benefit of his fellow-men. His good works were not confined to Liverpool, to Birkenhead, or to Lancashire; but he was known and respected all over the country. There are few prominent towns in England that he did not visit as a public man; and wherever he went he always paid his own expenses. This open-handedness was characteristic. He began life as a solicitor. I and many other friends thought he should have

been a barrister; since he was not only a keen lawyer; but also possessed in a high degree qualities which command success at the Bar: great natural insight, and a wide and a profound knowledge of men.

Clarke Aspinall filled the Liverpool Coronership with honour to himself and credit to the town. A just and an honourable man, he died at Bebington after a few days' illness. He was churchwarden of the village church for over thirty years. Thousands flocked to his funeral, high and low, rich and poor; all anxious to pay a last tribute of respect to the man taken away so suddenly in the midst of his good work.

Bromboro' Hall, situate about four miles from Birkenhead on the road to Chester, and three miles from Hooton Hall, was a favourite meet for Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton hounds. The Hall belonged to the Mainwarings. Mr. Mainwaring was fond of fox-hunting; and was always careful to preserve foxes in his neighbourhood.

Bromboro' Hall is now occupied by Sir William Forwood; who is well known in political and commercial circles in Liverpool. The Forwoods, of Liverpool, are much respected in

business circles ; and politically stand very high as staunch supporters of the Conservative party. Sir William's brother, Sir A. B. Forwood, died after a short illness. He was a man of great social and political power ; and was for some time a member of the Privy Council. The Conservative party were much indebted to his uncommon ability in fighting for them both in and out of the House of Commons.

One of my father's horses, "Velocipede," a perfect hunter, all at once went lame on his off foreleg. The vet. could not ascertain the cause ; but believed it to be a sprain of the fetlock or back sinews. The horse's shoes were removed ; and he was sent for the summer to a soft lea. In a few weeks, he seemed all right ; was brought up and shod ; for a few days went sound ; but as suddenly became lame again. The same treatment followed, with similar results ; lameness again coming on after a short spell of work. My father was convinced that something was wrong in the off hoof ; so he sent for the smith ; and ordered him to pare into the frog and hoof as deeply as possible without drawing blood. My father stood by

while the smith cut until near the blood, when the knife struck something hard. The smith carefully cut round and round the substance; until at length his circular knife disclosed and drew forth an old rusty pocket-knife blade; which had evidently been picked up either in a field or on the road at least two years previously. Old “Velocipede” must have suffered considerable pain; but with poulticing and careful treatment the horse in a few weeks was perfectly and permanently sound.

My father hunted “Velocipede” a few seasons; and then broke him to harness and drove him regularly. Unfortunately, old “Velocipede” had a trick of throwing up his hind legs at starting; not viciously, but a lively kick for a short distance after leaving the stable. Hence, he was always driven with a kicking-strap over his quarters. The vehicle my father liked to drive was an Irish jaunting-car; but the little driving-box in front is not a safe seat; as the horse’s quarters are close to the splashboard.

One day, my father gave a picnic at Eastham Woods. All the party drove. On returning in the dusk of the evening, my father drove the

jaunting-car ; and had six young ladies behind. He had not, as was his wont, examined the kicking-strap buckles ; and sad experience quickly proved the ostler's neglect. Shortly after starting, old "Velocipede" sent up his heels ; smashed the splashboard ; and broke my father's leg on the shin. Sorrow and trouble ensued ; and my poor father, although Mr. Mainwaring, of Brom-boro' Hall, kindly begged him to stop at his house, determined to drive home to Birkenhead at once. The shin-bone was fearfully smashed—a bad compound fracture. My father was on his back for twenty-one weeks ; and I don't think he ever recovered his usual good health. The bone was hurriedly and imperfectly set ; and the doctor, discovering this when the bones were about to unite, snapped them again ; and reset in a proper position.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thomas Brassey and Mr. Lawton—My Father and Thomas Brassey—Thomas Brassey's Kindness—His Business Career—His First Large Contract—The New Chester Road—Joseph Harrison—My Mother and Mrs. Harrison—The Brassey Family—The First Parliamentary Election in Birkenhead—My Father's Political Views—Lord and Lady Brassey—The Yacht *Sunbeam*—The Harrison Family—The Canada Works—Thomas Brassey on Lawyers' and Hotel Bills—Thomas Brassey's Letters—An Extraordinary Coincidence.

THOMAS BRASSEY, perhaps the greatest railway contractor the world has ever known, was a remarkable man. His early days were spent in Birkenhead, learning the profession of a surveyor with Mr. Lawton, the resident agent of Francis Richard Price. During this time, he lived in lodgings. My father was very fond of him ; and frequently asked him to dinner. One day, Mr. Brassey, who was a modest, unassuming, young man, asked my father to tell him where he could get a few bottles of sherry

like that we drank at dinner ; as he thought it was exceedingly nice wine. My father said he could not give him the name of the wine merchant who supplied him with that particular sherry ; but he would be pleased to send Mr. Brassey some if he would accept it. Thomas Brassey never forgot that little incident ; and whenever it was in his power to do me a good turn, he invariably did it ; and that in the kindest possible manner. He was a man, I may say, almost in a million. My father always said Thomas Brassey would rise to be a great man.

Mr. Brassey began his business life as land surveyor, coal and lime merchant, and general contractor. His works were situate on the banks of Wallasey Pool, now the Grèat Float. In the course of his career, he constructed thousands of miles of railway in the United Kingdom, France, Austria, and many other parts of the world : amassed a huge fortune ; and died in the South in his sixty-sixth year.

The first large contract undertaken by Thomas Brassey as a young man was to supply the bricks for building the present Liverpool Custom-House. Good clay was easily obtainable ; so the bricks

were made in Birkenhead. Many millions were required: all to be delivered on the ground in Liverpool, inside the famous old dock. It was a hard contract: broken bricks to be rejected. In view of the handling required, it seemed as though these must prove a large percentage. The bricks had to be loaded at the kilns on carts; carted to the Woodside sandy beach; discharged into flats on the shore at low water; carried across the river; discharged into carts on the beach in Liverpool, nearly opposite the site of the Albert Dock warehouses; then carted to the custom-house in course of erection; and again discharged ready for the workmen. How were the difficulties incidental to so much handling to be overcome? Here we see the resource of the man who was to win world-wide fame as a railway contractor. After working out the problem, he called upon a firm of Liverpool timber merchants; and arranged for a quantity of rough planking to be sawn into certain lengths. From these, with cheap nails, were made rough boxes: each to hold three dozen bricks; no top lids required. Thomas Brassey calculated the number of packages; and

the cost; what the carts would hold; and the weight. The contract was finally completed to the satisfaction of all concerned; and, I believe, the boxes were afterwards sold, and realised more money than they originally cost.

One of Thomas Brassey's largest local undertakings was the making, in 1839 and 1840, of a new road from Tranmere Ferry to Bromboro' village, called the New Chester Road. It was wide; well built; and macadamised from end to end. This new turnpike road was considered necessary in order to meet the increasing coach and carriage traffic between Birkenhead and Chester. It brought about a considerable saving in distance; as the traffic hitherto had been carried through Lower Tranmere, Bebington village, and Spital, to Bromboro'. It was costly; owing to the large new bridge built over the Bromboro' Pool.

Joseph Harrison, an early and a much respected resident, built a pretty villa, called Mersey Cottage, close to Monks' Ferry. It is now occupied by Mr. Chapman; and owned by the Joint Railway Committee. The garden wall and railings were built on the riverside; and at

high water in rough weather the waves washed into the garden. Joseph Harrison cut in the rocks opposite his garden gate a creek or square basin, with pebbly bottom, almost like a large bath. He did this for his family and others to bathe in; and very nice and safe it was. I can see it now in my mind's eye, as we children used to sit and watch the tide rising in the sunny summer days until the bathing began. Oh, those were indeed happy days! Would that they could all come over again!

My mother was very fond of Thomas Brassey; and saw a great deal of him. One day, Mrs. Harrison called; and asked her if she thought young Mr. Brassey would make a suitable husband for her daughter, Maria. My mother replied: "If your daughter, Maria, is fortunate enough to gain the affections of Mr. Brassey, I have no hesitation in saying that she is a lucky girl; and you and her father ought to be very pleased if such a happy event takes place." My mother's words came true; as Thomas Brassey proved a model husband.

After his marriage, Mr. Brassey lived in a villa, which he built for himself at the top of

Park Road South, then a mere lane or cart-way, called Claughton Road. He had nice gardens; and several acres of land; which he farmed. His farmer, David Penk, a fine old Cheshire type, lived near him in the farmhouse. The marriage was a most happy one; and both husband and wife were spared for many years. They had three sons; the eldest, Tom; now Lord Brassey; the second, Harry; who died a few years ago, leaving a large family behind him; the youngest, Albert; who resides at Heythrop Hall, Oxfordshire. Albert is a typical English country gentleman; fond of all kinds of field sports; and master of the fox-hounds. He and his wife have recently sustained a sad loss in the death of one of their sons in South Africa. The Brasseys were ever great friends of mine.

In 1861, at the first parliamentary election in Birkenhead, Thomas Brassey, junior (now Lord Brassey), contested the seat in the Liberal interest. The Conservative candidate was John Laird; who, after an exciting contest, conducted on both sides in an honourable spirit, was returned by a small majority. This was the first

political battle into which I really plunged. My father was a staunch Tory; almost to an extreme. He was an old freeman of Liverpool; as was my grandfather. The Tory blood which ran in my veins so biassed me that for many years I supported Conservatism with all the might and vigour I possessed.

Lord and Lady Brassey in their youthful days frequently visited at my house in Birkenhead. The day when the celebrated yacht *Sunbeam* was launched at Seacombe, where she was built, we gave a dinner-party in honour of the event; and the Brasseys stayed at my house. Lord Brassey, we used to say, ought to have been an Admiral in the British Navy; as he loved the sea; was justly proud of England's maritime power; and must have travelled many thousands of miles in that famous steam-yacht; which is now floating safe and sound; but which I hope some day to hear has been replaced by a larger and swifter vessel more in keeping with present-day ocean travelling.

The only surviving child of Joseph Harrison, Mrs. Salt, has resided in Birkenhead nearly all her life. She is loved and respected by every-

one. Few possess such a truly amiable disposition. I may say she is perhaps my earliest friend living. I remember her as a very pretty girl; and a great attraction for us boys at Mersey Cottage. That she may live many more happy years is my earnest desire!

The eldest son, George Harrison, was an engineer; for some years he was chief on the railway at Perth; and subsequently head of the Canada Works, on Wallasey Pool. These works were built by Thomas Brassey for the purpose of making the Victoria Bridge at Montreal, he being the contractor for the Grand Trunk Railway in Canada. In these enterprises, Thomas Brassey worked in conjunction with Sir William Jackson.

Henry Harrison was my schoolfellow; and one of my earliest and dearest friends. He was the best-tempered boy and man I ever knew. For many years, he was employed with Thomas Brassey in railway contracting work: worked hard; and died a few years ago, wealthy and beloved. Both he and Thomas Brassey worked too hard; and died before reaching old age!

Old Mrs. Harrison was a dear old lady. I was her special favourite as a boy; and her kindness

to me I shall never forget. Even when I grew to be a man, she always gave me a kiss whenever we met.

I have heard Thomas Brassey say that his lawyers' bills and his hotel bills in his busy contracting days bothered him very much. At last, he determined never to examine them; but simply gave instructions for them to be measured with a two-foot rule. This, he said, brought him to the conclusion that they were so many pounds a foot; and that the only thing to do was to pay.

What a man he was! Born and bred in dear old Cheshire, Thomas Brassey was a gentleman in the fullest sense of the word: quiet, simple-living, and simple-hearted; kind, amiable, and patient to a degree. Letters frequently betoken the true character of a man. Thomas Brassey's letters testify to his simple nature and to his loving heart. Here I am tempted to reproduce two characteristic letters from this dear old friend:

“GRANGEFIELD,
1st September, 1861.

“MY DEAR HARRY,—If it is quite convenient and agreeable to Mrs. Aspinall to receive us to-morrow afternoon, we will do ourselves the

pleasure of riding over for tea. I know you will excuse the liberty I take in making such a proposal. I only arrived here at 12.30 this morning; and must leave on Tuesday; so that to-morrow afternoon is the only opportunity of paying you a visit.

“With the united love of my wife and the household here to Mrs. Aspinall, believe me, my dear Harry, yours very truly,

“THOMAS BRASSEY.”

“56, LOWNDES SQUARE,
2nd April, 1868.

“MY DEAR HARRY,—On my return home last night, I was welcomed by Mrs. Brassey's presenting me with the most beautiful snuff-box which you have so kindly sent me; and which I shall carefully preserve as a memento of our long and valued friendship. The gift is enhanced from the fact of the box being handed down through your kind remembrance of me.

“Will you accept yourself and convey to Mrs. Aspinall our united affectionate regards? and believe me, my dear Harry, yours very truly,

“THOMAS BRASSEY.”

During the summer season, for some years, my family used to reside at West Kirby. One day, I received a letter from Mr. Brassey saying he was coming to Birkenhead to stop with his brother-in-law, George Harrison, for a few days; and would like to visit us with Mrs. Brassey and spend a long afternoon; as he had not been in West Kirby since he was a boy. I wrote back to say how gratified we should be to have the pleasure of a visit from him and his good wife; and asked him to let me know what time they would be likely to arrive; and whether they would prefer dinner or tea. This brought a prompt answer, couched in these words: "Certainly, tea, shrimps, and bread and butter; nothing else. We can get plenty of dinners in London." Nearly the whole afternoon and evening were spent upon the shore.

Thomas Brassey lived for many years in Lowndes Square; and on my visits to London I frequently dined at his house; as he insisted upon it; and I thoroughly enjoyed the company of the kind-hearted, hospitable people whom I had known from childhood. I remember Mrs. Brassey's relating an extraordinary coincidence.

The family had gone to St. Leonards for a change, leaving their London house in charge of the butler. One night, Mrs. Brassey had an uneasy feeling that things were going wrong at Lowndes Square ; so off she went to London by an early train next day. On the butler's opening the door, Mrs. Brassey felt that her fears were unfounded ; but thought it as well to go through the house. All seemed right until she came to the top room of all ; where she discovered a number of packages apparently ready for removal. She had an attendant with her ; and when she asked the butler what the packages contained, he changed colour ; bolted ; and was never seen again. Examination proved that the packages were crammed with silver-plate and other valuables.

CHAPTER XIV.

Banquet to Thomas Brassey—George Meakin—His Sad End—
Samuel Holme's Great Sea-Wall Scheme—Sudden Death of
Rector Fielden—"Five Days' Racing ; One Day's Hanging"
—Shipbuilding in Birkenhead—The Patent Slip—Birkenhead
Shore in my Boyhood—Thunderstorms—Badger - Baiting—
The "Good Old Days"—"A Beautiful Baby"—Robert Lowe's
Epitaph—Quaint Epitaphs.

IN the 'fifties, a presentation was made to Thomas Brassey. A banquet at the London Coffee House, Ludgate Hill, was given to him by his agents ; who numbered about two hundred. The presentation consisted of his portrait in oils, and a costly shield, emblematic of his undertakings, covered with beautiful figures and other exquisite designs. Mr. Brassey invited me to attend the banquet ; and to witness the presentation. It was quite a brilliant spectacle.

One of the principal guests was Mr. Brassey's agent for Birkenhead, George Meakin ; whom I

knew very well. It fell to his lot to propose the toast of Mr. Brassey's health. George was no speech-maker; but he rose to his feet; and addressed the gathering in these words: "Gentlemen, as a leading agent in Mr. Brassey's employ, I have to propose to you the toast of his health. Gentlemen, I am sorry to say I cannot give Mr. Brassey a character." (Roars of laughter; in which Thomas Brassey heartily joined.) George again repeated that he was sorry he couldn't give Mr. Brassey a character; and was evidently stuck; when a friend whispered: "Say, 'no words of yours can adequately express the great esteem you have for Mr. Brassey either as a man or an employer.'" George was glad to jump at any loophole out of his difficulty; so he took the hint; but his speech was a joke against him for many a day.

George Meakin was a stonemason by trade. He it was who carved the figureheads round the upper outside wall of Holy Trinity Church, together with some rather pretty heads inside. It was said the demons were placed outside, and the angels inside, the sacred edifice.

Poor fellow! he met with a sad end. He had undertaken on his own account a contract for widening a thirty miles section on the London and North-Western Railway between Rugby and Willesden. One day, he was superintending the work; and, being rather deaf, was unaware of the approach of one of his own locomotive engines. It came upon him suddenly; knocked him down; and took off his head. This painful accident was a severe shock to his many friends.

Samuel Holme, of Liverpool, engaged in some gigantic building and contracting undertakings. I well remember his firm as a boy, "Samuel & James Holme." Samuel was an intimate friend of Thomas Brassey's; indeed, he was trustee in a settlement made by Mr. Brassey in favour of his wife. One of Mr. Holme's largest schemes, for which he made all calculations and financial arrangements, was to build a great sea-wall, with an esplanade at the top: to commence from the site of the old Wallasey Pool; and to extend *viâ* Seacombe, Egremont, New Brighton, Leasowe, Meols, Hoylake, and

across the Dee to the Point of Ayr; with a ship canal up the centre of the Dee to Chester; in order that navigation might be kept up. However, the authorities connected with the navigation of the Mersey strenuously opposed Mr. Holme; with the result that he found it impossible to put his views into practical effect. Possibly, some such huge scheme may yet be carried through; though it is far from probable.

A sensational event occurred on the walls of Chester, overlooking the Roodee racecourse. Rector Fielden (father of the Reverend Canon Fielden, now Rector of Bebington, a man of great worth and highly esteemed) was very fond of all kinds of field sports. I remember his hunting with Sir Thomas Stanley's Hooton hounds when I was a boy. He was an aristocratic-looking man, with a dignified air. Rector Fielden had for some years visited Chester on the Cup day. He was very fond of a race; but never cared to mix with the people, either on the stands or the course. One day, he was watching the race for the Cup; when, without the slightest warning, he fell down and instantly

expired. He was taken into the vicarage close to; then occupied by the Rev. George Salt; doctors arrived; but the rector had breathed his last.

My father used to say that in his younger days the old May Chester races were the races of the country. Later on, they became the races of the world. It was a common saying: "Five days' racing, one day's hanging." The races began on Monday and finished on Friday; while, on Saturday, prisoners condemned to death at the county of Chester March Assizes, were hanged. It appeared a barbarous practice, but was apparently only a coincidence.

Years ago, shipbuilding and ship-repairing were the busiest trades in Birkenhead. A considerable business was done on Wallasey Pool at the patent slip. This was cleverly designed for small vessels; but as the tonnage increased graving docks were substituted. It was quite an interesting sight to see vessels cradled and hauled up by means of chains and engines well out of the water. The patent slip was the only one of the kind in the district.

In the early days of Birkenhead, little inducement was offered to settlers. The Russells were a nice family. They lived in a pretty villa, surrounded by large gardens, at Bridge End, near Wallasey Pool. The house remains; but is now a public-house, called the Dock Hotel. Robert Russell used to dine at my father's occasionally. He was much esteemed.

Birkenhead, in my boyhood, mainly consisted of green fields, farms, and country lanes. There were then no docks; no sea-walls; very few streets; no street lamps; no gas and waterworks: in short, Birkenhead was a very small place; half town, half village. Wallasey Pool at low water could be crossed either by carefully stepping over large stones placed at low-water mark for the purpose; or by taking off one's shoes and stockings, and wading through the mud. In the direction of Seacombe, it extended to what is known as the Halfpenny Bridge. The Pool was tidal, filling up and emptying as the tides rose and fell. Plenty of eels and crabs were caught. The Woodside beach, north of the slip, was composed of hard,



HORSES AND DONKEYS WERE ON HIRE.—*Page 163.*

dry sand, well suited for bathing. Many visitors from Liverpool and the country round came for the bathing season. The water was always clear; and the bathing machines were well patronised. Donkeys were on hire; and the merriment ran high. The beach, south of Woodside Ferry slip, as far as Birkenhead Ferry, was rocky; and covered with beautiful seaweed; periwinkles and crabs abounded; and much we enjoyed gathering and eating them.

Thunderstorms are of rare occurrence in this locality, although occasionally we may have a brief visit. The Lancashire hills to the east, the river Mersey, the river Dee, and the Welsh hills to the west, together with the close proximity of the sea, seem to draw away the storms. I have known many rumblings and apparent signs of an approaching storm; but in a short time the sky has been clear again. However, when we are visited by a thunderstorm, the weather is usually disturbed for many days after, sometimes weeks.

The most terrific thunderstorm I ever witnessed was at the falls of Niagara in 1840.

The weather had been gloriously fine, and blazing hot. All at once the sky became black; and a storm broke. The lightning was fearfully and dangerously vivid. This thunder-storm lasted for a little over an hour; when the whole aspect became almost immediately changed: the sun shone out; and, for some time after, the most brilliant weather prevailed. It made a deep impression on me; and I have never forgotten it.

Close to the shore, in the Corporation field, where Clovers' shipbuilding yard now is, was a large hole. In this lived a wild badger. Where he came from we never knew; but after much difficulty, assisted by our bull-terriers, we caught him alive; procured a suitable box for him to live in; and arranged with old Booth to keep him in one of the prison cells. We regularly baited him; and had fine fun. People may think badger-baiting mean and cruel sport; so it is for men. Boys, however, do things unthinkingly; and as the badger was always baited in a long narrow-spout box, the dogs seldom hurt him; as he had a large leather collar on; and was always

drawn by the dogs laying hold of this. Badger-baiting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and bull-baiting were old English sports in the "good old days." These old sports, through advancing refinement, have died a natural death. May their modern successors build up the manly sportsmanlike character so typically English without the debasing influences of the older sports.

A diminutive fisherman, named Jimmy Kaye, used to reside at Tranmere. He was an exceedingly small man; but very active, and greatly respected. Jimmy decided to marry; and in due course was presented by his wife with a son and heir. Shortly afterwards, Jimmy was taken ill. Mrs. Kaye had a very large cradle; and, thinking he would be warmer and more comfortable in the kitchen, she put Jimmy quietly to rest in this small bed. During the afternoon, some ladies called to see the baby; walked in; looked at the cradle; and exclaimed in chorus: "Oh! Mrs. Kaye. What a beautiful baby!" Poor Jimmy laughed; and the visitors discovered they were in ecstasies over the baby's father. Rather striking evidence,

I think, that many ladies praise babies as a matter of course, without giving them a serious thought!

The Right Honourable Robert Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrook, in his day, was one of the finest orators in the House of Commons. He was an Albino; had a peculiar expression; and invariably closed his eyes before pouring forth the eloquence with which he always charmed, even if he did not persuade, his hearers. Robert Lowe was to have appeared in Birkenhead in its early political days; but, from one cause or another, his visit never came off. He had a bitter tongue when he liked; and, in consequence, made many enemies.

One of the numerous victims of his caustic wit handed across the benches of the House of Commons the following lines:—

“Here lies what once was Robert Lowe,
The falsest friend, the bitterest foe;
If he has gone to realms of bliss and love,
Then concord must have left the Heavens above:
But if perchance he’s found a lower level,
Well, then, we heartily commiserate the devil.”

Mr. Lowe took his revenge in characteristic

fashion. He invited the epitaphist to dinner; and gave him nothing but boiled goose, without trimmings!

Talking of epitaphs, reminds me of a local worthy with a reputation for clever characterisation. This accomplishment brought him many invitations; some given merely to provide entertainment for other guests. One host, notoriously cheese-paring, and quite a screw, begged that he might have his epitaph written, and, on his promising not to be offended, the following lines were produced:—

“Death threw his dart at Hardman’s heart
But how was he astounded:
For from the part, with sudden start,
The weapon back rebounded.

“Ho! Ho! quoth Death; and drew his breath;
My powerful arm, you mock it!
But here’s a blow that will lay you low,
And he killed him *through his pocket*.”

Another striking epitaph from the same pen, written on the members of a well-known local family, who in their own peculiar way thoroughly

enjoyed the good things of this life, runs as follows :—

“ Here lies Bob ; and here lies Daniel ;
Here lies John ; and here his spaniel.
Which of the four to heaven has gone ?
The dog—a thousand pounds to one.”

CHAPTER XV.

The Jackson Family—Sir William Jackson and Sir Joseph Paxton—Birkenhead Park—Opening of Birkenhead Park—"Mount Pisgah"—Lewis Hornblower—"The Lively Flea"—A Residential Scheme—The Second Parliamentary Election in Birkenhead—John Ravenscroft and the Flour-Bag—Thomas H. Jackson—The Great Exhibition—The Exhibition at Sydenham.

IN the 'thirties, John Somerville Jackson and William (afterwards Sir William) Jackson took up their residence in Birkenhead. Once settled, these gentlemen soon made their presence felt. Most active and highly intelligent, they were always at work endeavouring to push forward to the fullest extent the best interests of their adopted town. The gas and water-works undertaking in 1840 emanated from the Jacksons alone; while town improvements in every department were initiated and carried out by them with quite extraordinary energy and foresight. They have, indeed, left behind them many monuments of their wonderful activity.

Our beautiful Birkenhead Park was the creation of Sir William Jackson; to whom is due the laying out of the Claughton property; which, when he settled in the town, was purely agricultural. The Birkenhead streets also were laid out according to his instructions. That beautiful residence, the Manor House, Claughton, was designed and built at great expense under his special care.

John Jackson designed and built the Market Square. This solid structure, with white Storeton stone frontages, cost, I believe, between £30,000 and £40,000.

Sir William Jackson was well entitled to his dignity; as he was a staunch member of the Liberal party; and a hard-working representative. I remember when he brought Joseph (afterwards Sir Joseph) Paxton (head gardener to the Duke of Devonshire) to Birkenhead; and drove him along the lanes from Woodside, to show him the land which he wished to have converted into a park. Sir Joseph Paxton remarked with amazement that he considered it would be almost an impossibility to do what was proposed. However, Sir William Jackson was not a man to

be easily daunted. He never took a doubtful view of any undertaking to which he gave himself up ; and before Sir Joseph Paxton left the town, he had, with the assistance of his friend, sketched out a rough plan forecasting the way in which Sir William Jackson's far-sighted scheme might be carried out. Borrowing powers having been obtained from Parliament, the site of the park was purchased by the Birkenhead Commissioners from Francis Richard Price. The acreage secured by the ratepayers, including the ornamental portion and the residential, was 250. The land cost about £60,000. In 1844, the first sod was cut in the presence of a large assemblage, amid general rejoicing. The day was observed as a public holiday ; in fact, the whole town was *en fête*.

Sir William Jackson planted a tree on a small hillock, which still stands in the park ; and, as he was completing the planting, somebody called out : " Behold Moses on Mount Pisgah viewing the promised land." This was appropriate to the occasion ; and the hillock for many years went by the name of Mount Pisgah. It is situate at the top end of the lower lake.

The park entrance, the various entrance gates and lodges, together with the railings enclosing the park, were designed by Lewis Hornblower; and cost a large sum of money.

Lewis Hornblower was a well-known man in Birkenhead and Liverpool, much esteemed by a large circle of friends. He was a freemason. Quite a character in his way, he was jovial, not to say convivial; perhaps too much so for his own health and comfort. His singing, too, of comic songs was most amusing. I never but once saw John Laird indulge in a hearty laugh. It was at a banquet, at which Lewis Hornblower sang a comic song, called the "Lively Flea"; and his rendering was the most humorous and ridiculous thing I ever heard or saw. Everyone was convulsed with laughter. Mr. Hornblower not only sang the song; but he acted the flea and its victim to the very life. "Art thou still at thy bloody work?"

After the park had been laid out, and was on a fair road to completion, either William Laird (father of John Laird, M.P.,) or his brother, the first Macgregor Laird (I forget which), gave

instructions to a local architect to draw a plan, embodying a scheme for laying out the whole of the building land included in the Birkenhead Park property for villas, double and single. A clever architectural drawing was the result. Whether or not it is now in existence I cannot say. It was specified that the houses should be built of best material, with thick walls, and all arrangements essential for warm and comfortable dwellings. The fronts were to be of Storeton stone and red or yellow bricks. The plan allowed for about 800 houses : each with ample space around, and really good drives and entrances. It was a fair calculation for the annual rental of the houses to be from £60 to £80 ; and that the tenants would, in the main, spend money freely amongst the tradesmen in Birkenhead. This was very interesting at the time ; but the scheme never got further than paper. Birkenhead is yearly extending further and further into the country ; and the private residents will probably continue to seek their dwelling-houses outside the town.

Sir William Jackson's eldest son, Henry Mather Jackson, was the Liberal candidate who opposed John Laird at the second and most memorable

Birkenhead parliamentary election. Henry Mather Jackson was an exceptionally courteous man ; and a powerful candidate, when backed by his father's immense popularity. The election was a violently contested one. Both Conservatives and Liberals were thoroughly prepared for a stiff fight ; and it was a fight. I was, I may say, John Laird's right hand man ; and worked very hard for the cause ; which was not only strongly political ; but also seriously local. My position was an awkward one ; as I was very intimate with both candidates. However, I did not flinch from my task.

In the old electioneering days, platforms were erected, called hustings, to which each political party marched in procession. John Ravenscroft, the chairman of the Liberal party, took his stand in front of the hustings ; but the moment he opened his mouth to speak, a bag, made of thin tissue paper, and filled with flour, struck him in the middle of the face ; burst ; and nearly smothered eyes, nose, and mouth. No injury was done ; as bags were made for the express purpose. However, the worthy chairman was so taken aback that he turned tail ; ran for his life ;

and was seen no more that day. Great hilarity prevailed, especially amongst the Conservative party.

The poll opened at eight o'clock in the morning ; and John Laird was so far ahead at mid-day that the Liberal party wished to close the voting-booth and stop the contest. We objected ; and insisted upon the voting going on to the legal closing time, four o'clock ; when John Laird was returned by a large majority. The town was in a perfect fever of excitement. The moment the numbers were known I was seized bodily by the crowd ; and carried, *nolens volens*, amidst loud cheering and to a band accompaniment, to Hamilton Square ; where I was immediately called upon to address an enormous assemblage of people in front of Mr. Laird's house. I spoke from the balcony ; and the applause was simply overwhelming. Great were the rejoicings in the town ; not on account of Mr. Jackson's defeat ; for he was much liked ; and had carried through all the preliminary political meetings for weeks before the election in a most honourable manner : the real cause of rejoicing was that a Conservative member had again been returned ; and that

member, John Laird ; who was a large employer of labour ; and perhaps the leading man in Birkenhead.

Henry Mather Jackson died a few years after under singularly pathetic circumstances. He had just been made a judge of the High Court, and was about to take his seat on the Bench ; when he was attacked by a sudden illness, and died shortly afterwards, I may say, in the prime of life.

Sir William Jackson lived to a ripe old age ; although he was never a very robust man. When a boy, I remember my father on his return home one day telling my mother that he had just shaken hands with Will Jackson. My father then expressed his opinion that he would never see Will again ; as he had been ordered to Italy without delay, he having shown undoubted signs of consumption. However, Sir William Jackson lived for many years after.

His son, Thomas H. Jackson, has resided for many years at the Manor House. He is a thorough sportsman ; and has always been loved and appreciated. Mr. Jackson dispenses the warmest hospitality. His wife, an excellent

woman, died a few years ago quite unexpectedly, leaving a large family of comely boys and girls.

When the first Great Exhibition, under the distinguished patronage of the Prince Consort, was mooted, some of the most talented architects and builders in the kingdom were busily engaged on plans for a suitable building. Sir Joseph Paxton had built some beautiful glass conservatories and hothouses at Chatsworth ; and, one day, when travelling from London to Derbyshire, he had the happy thought that a structure of glass and iron would prove an attractive building in which to hold the Exhibition. He at once drew a rough sketch on a piece of notepaper ; and on the following day completed his plan in detail. Sir Joseph then communicated with Fox, Henderson, & Co. (the Birmingham builders of bridges, girders, and railway stations, in which glass and iron are combined) ; in conjunction with whom he prepared a complete specification, illustrated by clever drawings. This was duly submitted to the Royal Commissioners ; who gladly adopted the scheme in its entirety. I visited the building while in course of erection on a piece of land at Kensington, really in

Hyde Park. One great difficulty Sir Joseph had to surmount was due to the Woods and Forests' prohibiting the cutting down of any of the beautiful trees growing on the site. Consequently, the elevation had to be very much increased in order to cover these trees ; which were allowed to grow inside the building ; and beautiful, indeed, they looked. I had a permanent admission ticket presented to me by Fox, Henderson, & Co. The opening day will ever live in my memory. Never before or since have I witnessed so brilliant a spectacle. Volumes might be written without exhausting the varied products of the world's industry and art, for the first time in history displayed side by side under the magnificent roof of Crystal Palace. Of the social aspects of the Great Exhibition, I say nothing. Its educational value ; its stimulus to industry and art ; its beneficent effect on the intercourse of nations : these cannot be estimated. Viewed from every point, the Great Exhibition was an unqualified success ; worthy of the great Prince whose memory it keeps green.

A few years after, the Exhibition at Sydenham was opened by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

I was there with my wife and sister. The admission tickets were one guinea each. I was much struck with the singing. Clara Novella led; and was accompanied by three thousand voices. When the national anthem was sung, tens of thousands joined in it. The effect defies description. I remember the scene as though it were yesterday. The good Prince and our beloved Queen have gone; but their memory remains in all loyal and faithful hearts!

CHAPTER XVI.

John Laird, M.P.—Macgregor Laird—"Him Sink : Him Sink"—A Profitable Export Transaction—Lairds' Ship and Boiler Yard—Restall Bevis—Wreck of the *Captain*—Loss of the *Birkenhead*—The *Wirral* and the *Flambeau*—Profitable Public Spirit—Vicissitudes of Birkenhead—The "City of the Future"—Presentation to John Laird, M.P.—John Laird's Letter—His Statue.

JOHN LAIRD, M.P., was an exceptional man in every way. He hunted with Sir Thomas Stanley's fox-hounds; afterwards with Sir William Stanley's until Sir William lost his paternal estates; when Mr. Laird hunted with the Cheshire hounds almost up to the time of his death in 1874. He never looked better than in his scarlet hunting-coat, white breeches, and top boots. He rode first-class horses; and well up with the hounds.

John Laird and my father were most intimate friends for many years, meeting frequently at each other's dining-tables, and exchanging other

hospitalities. Mr. Laird frequently walked from his residence at Bridge End, North Birkenhead, close to Wallasey Pool, to eight o'clock tea and talk. He loved his tea; and always said my mother's tea was the finest in quality and in flavour he had ever tasted. Fresh boiling water, plenty of best China tea, a pinch of fine green tea for flavouring: these, together with thick cream, were the secret of my mother's success.

Many years ago, Macgregor Laird fitted out an expedition to Africa to explore the Niger. My mother and I took leave of him at Birkenhead Ferry, just before he went on board the *Quora* which lay in the Sloyne. She was built and equipped by Lairds. Long after, by a strange coincidence, I was with my father at the Woodside Ferry, one Sunday afternoon, when the sailing ship, *Columbia*, from the west coast of Africa, dropped anchor in the river opposite Woodside. A boat put off from the ship for the ferry slip; and Macgregor Laird, just recovering from fever, and enveloped in blankets, landed. He was an exceptionally handsome man, kind-hearted, and most agreeable. Everyone who knew him loved and

respected him. To me, personally, he was greatly attached; and I thought there was hardly anyone like him living. It was he and his brother, John Laird, who influenced me at Fawcett & Preston's. Macgregor Laird was mainly instrumental in founding the British and American Steam Navigation Co. for the New York service. This company owned the *British Queen*; built on the Clyde, and engined by Napier; and the *President*; built by Curling & Young, Limehouse, and engined by Fawcett & Preston, Liverpool. Macgregor Laird was also the pioneer and originator of the existing line of African steamers. He was a large-hearted man; and dispensed princely hospitality at his residence in Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. His wife was a charming woman; and his family really delightful.

Sir Alfred Jones, whom I have known from his boyhood, is a most indomitable man. Well does he merit the prominent position he has so cleverly carved out for himself! I have heard Sir Alfred speak in the highest terms of the worth and power of Macgregor Laird; both as an English gentleman and as one of the most

enterprising African travellers this country ever produced.

When Lairds had their ship and boiler yard on Wallasey Pool, they built large numbers of iron boats for India. Thomas Gouldson was an old and a valued workman, well known and respected in Birkenhead. He told me that he took out the first boats and barges in sections; and that each and every piece was marked. These were shipped in sailing vessels; as there were then no steamers to India. When unloaded in Calcutta, the various segments had to be built up and refitted before launching. The natives' astonishment when the heavy iron plates, framing, and rivets were unloaded was great. They laughed and shouted at the idea of iron floating: seized hold of the rivets; ran to the water's edge; and placed the iron in the sea to try if it would float. Then rose the cry: “Him sink; him sink; him sink!” Later on, when the structure was completed, and the lighters and barges were afloat, the awe of the natives was indescribable. Many knelt down devoutly; and worshipped the wonderful floating mass of iron; which was speedily loaded

with all sorts of merchandise down to the gunnel.

Here I will relate an interesting circumstance which occurred some years ago. An enterprising American shipped from New York a cargo of Newtown pippin apples, carefully packed in barrels and sawdust. In order to keep the fruit cool, he distributed among the packages several tons of ice. The cargo was conveyed in a sailing ship from New York to Calcutta. In due course, the vessel arrived; when, on the hatchways being removed, both ice and apples were found in perfect condition. The demand for the delicious fruit and ice was very great. Both were quite a novelty in India. The natives would have it that the ice burnt their fingers on touching it. As a matter of fact, the extreme coldness of the ice on contact with the natives' tender fingers raised blisters similar to those due to fire. Curious to note, although the transaction was a most profitable one all round, the ice realised considerably more than the apples.

When William Laird (the late head of Laird Brothers) was taken into his father's office, he

developed no ordinary talent for drawing models. Just then, the Woodside Ferry required a new ferry-steamer; and the committee determined to offer a premium of £100 for the best design. The prize model turned out to be William Laird's; and very pleased he and his father were. Indeed, we were all gratified at a Birkenhead man's being successful. The design was a beautiful one; and is now in Lairds' model room. The ferry-steamer was to cost £11,000; but, as the committee had no money at the time, Lairds entered into a contract to build two smaller vessels much upon the same lines: each to cost £7500; delivery to be spread over two years; payments to be made by instalments at certain intervals; and to cover the same period. However, our ferry exchequer was empty; so we only took one delivery, the *Liverpool*. We agreed to Lairds selling the sister boat, the *Thais*; which they did to the Government; who sent it to Malta for a tug-boat. This was in 1854. The *Liverpool* was one of the best ferry-boats in our service.

Another crack paddle-steamer, built by Lairds for the Bridgwater Trustees, was the *Countess of*

Ellesmere, a beautiful little boat, of light draught, and great speed. She ran from Liverpool for some time a tidal service to Runcorn for passenger traffic; and a very pleasant sail it was: eighteen miles from George's Pier to Runcorn. The *Countess of Ellesmere* never missed her tide; and created a good traffic; but not sufficient to pay. She was subsequently sold; and ran, I believe, for some years at St. Petersburg.

The *Ellan Vannin*, a paddle-steamer, built for the Liverpool and Ramsey passenger service, was a perfect model and an excellent sea-boat; well-fitted, white funnel, and elegantly painted. She did her work well; but the traffic was insufficient to pay. I offered £10,000 for her during the Crimean War; but her Liverpool owners refused my offer because the season was on. The *Ellan Vannin*, I understand, was subsequently sold for yacht purposes at Malta; but only realised £3500. In her day, she was the fastest steamer on the Mersey.

Whilst on ships and steam, I may say I have heard that the City of Dublin Co.'s Royal Irish Mail s.s. *Connaught*, one of four

of similar type, built by Lairds, ran across from Holyhead to Kingstown on her official trial in a rough head sea in two hours and four minutes from light to light. This is marvellous work. The nineteenth century will go down to posterity as a wonderful mechanical era as applied to locomotion.

Any task Lairds undertake they seem to successfully accomplish. For half a century travellers have remarked: "You are in a safe ship. She was built by Lairds, of Birkenhead. No bogus rivets in her." However, as we used to say at Fawcett & Preston's: "If you want speed, you must have substantial power to drive your models." Lairds know this; and years ago secured the services of an old friend of mine, Restall Bevis; a fellow apprentice at Fawcett & Preston's; and, I may say, one of the most eminent marine engineers of his time. I knew him intimately from boyhood. In our apprentice days, the Government lock-up pressure of steam in marine boilers was $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to the square inch. Now, from 100 to 200 lb. is the order of the day. One can only exclaim: "What next!"

Restall Bevis was the son of Commander Bevis, of the Royal Navy; who resided in Birkenhead; and had a responsible position as resident Post Office Agent in Liverpool. Commander Bevis had a very pretty little paddle-wheel steamer, or tender, the *Redwing*. He was responsible for the Post Office arrangements connected with the mail steamers' arrivals and departures from the river; and the *Redwing* had her fires banked ready for service day and night. Restall Bevis died only recently, shortly after his entering the Birkenhead Town Council. He had been nominated as Mayor; and would doubtless have been elected to that position had he lived.

The *Captain* was a man-of-war; built at Lairds. She was designed by Captain Cooper Coles; a most agreeable man; whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Mr. Laird's dinner-table shortly before the vessel left Birkenhead. Sad to say, the *Captain* was lost off Teneriffe; and most of those on board were drowned, including Captain Cooper Coles. Only seven or eight lives were saved; and those in an extraordinary manner. When the vessel turned

over, her bottom for a few minutes was above water; no doubt, kept buoyant by the confined air. One of the boats had broken loose from her davits, and was floating past; when the boatswain and some other men clinging to the vessel managed to reach her; got on board; and were saved. Such was the boatswain's story. Had it not been for this, the *Captain* would have added yet another tale to the mysteries of the sea.

I well remember the launch of the paddle-steamer, *Birkenhead*; built as a troopship for the Government. The wreck of this vessel caused a great sensation; largely due to the heroic conduct of our famous soldiers; of whom there were many on board. The loss of life was great; but the discipline of our troops through the trying ordeal was most wonderful. Had the vessel not sunk so quickly, the discipline and order were such that every soul on board might have been saved. This catastrophe stands out as one of the most striking examples of the marvellous discipline and courage of our gallant British soldiers and sailors.

The *Wirral*, a double-ended paddle-steamer,

built by Lairds for Woodside Ferry, was strongly built with powerful engines. One foggy morning, while crossing to Liverpool, she ran stem on to the midship section of the steamer, *Flambeau*, a Clyde-built wooden paddle-steamer, lying off the Albert Warehouses. This steamer was of great length, and low in the water. Once, a passenger boat on the Clyde, it had then recently been placed on the service between Liverpool, Beaumaris, and Menai Bridge. The *Wirral* cut her entirely in two; and the whole immediately sank. The crew were saved. The Admiralty at once seized the *Wirral*; placed the "broad arrow" on her; and locked her up in dock.

At that time, the ferry was short of boats; destitute of finances; and entirely without credit. The owners of the *Flambeau* claimed about £4500. Thereupon, two financiers living in Birkenhead, John Hind and William Hind, came forward and found the money, taking a mortgage on the *Wirral*, and township security at 10 per cent. Notwithstanding this high rate of interest, the loan remained for a considerable time; for it was

impossible to work the ferry without the *Wirral*. John and William Hind used to say this was the best temporary investment they ever made. They enjoyed the loan for a long time; as Township Bonds were almost valueless. This incident was alluded to by a worthy alderman at a recent Council meeting in Birkenhead; but he erroneously represented that John and William Hind, George Rae, and Ambrose Waln had saved the town from bankruptcy. The alderman subsequently told the writer that he related the story as given to him by an old resident.

Birkenhead has passed through many vicissitudes; but her burdens were all relieved by the constant efforts of the Birkenhead Improvement Commissioners; whose assiduous efforts, and determined, straightforward policy, after many years' hard work, placed the town in a position of wealth and prosperity. John Laird, M.P., Sir William Jackson, William Keightley, and I were prominent members of the Board of Commissioners; and we all persistently worked with the single aim of promoting the prosperity of Birkenhead.

At this time, when Birkenhead credit was at its lowest ebb, and the public were continually calling the Commissioners to account for what was considered extravagant street making, sewerage, and other necessary outlays for a new town, the writer in one of his speeches at a Commissioners' meeting denounced the all but slanderous denunciations in the press; and indignantly referred to Birkenhead as the "city of the future." This phrase seems to have stuck; for it is continually cropping up in the local press.

John Laird, M.P., was for many years chairman of the Board of Commissioners, and a most active member of the Board. In fact, his opinions and advice on the multifarious matters connected with township business were always worthy of our first consideration. One day, he announced at our meeting that owing to the great and increasing magnitude of his shipbuilding business, he was reluctantly compelled to resign the chairmanship of the Board; also to terminate the active part he had hitherto taken in township affairs. I at once called some of my colleagues together; and suggested that we should make

Mr. Laird a presentation. My suggestion met with a warm response; and a committee, of which I was appointed chairman, was soon formed to make the necessary arrangements. A subscription list was started, and thrown open to the public; by means of which the sum of £500 was raised. I believe I am correct in saying that hardly any class in the community was unrepresented on the subscription list. This, in itself, is striking testimony to the widespread popularity of the man who more than anyone else made the town of Birkenhead a Conservative stronghold. It was decided that the presentation should take the form of silver plate; so an order was placed with Elkington & Co., of Liverpool; who carried out the work in a highly creditable manner. The gift was only a fitting acknowledgment from the commissioners and ratepayers of Birkenhead of the manner in which John Laird had presided over the deliberations of the governing body for so many years.

Mr. Laird and his family were much gratified; and, in a very short time, invitations were received by the twenty-one members of the

Board to a banquet at John Laird's house. The table looked really beautiful. I remember it well. My old and intimate friend, William Laird, at whose house I was a frequent visitor, often told me how pleased the family were at the respect in which their father was held.

I was deeply touched at receiving a letter written in Mr. Laird's old friendly style, from what, alas! in a very few days, proved to be his deathbed. I am constrained to reproduce the letter here.

" BIRKENHEAD,
7th September, 1874.

" DEAR ASPINALL,—Mrs. Laird has handed me your kind and affectionate note of 5th inst., but I am quite sure on reconsidering the matter you will see that it will be quite impossible for me to say I will see you in preference to my other friends.

" I do not see any outside my own family, and shall not do so until I can manage to get away for my health, and I do not expect to be able to start off anywhere before the first or second week in October, for although I am certainly better in many respects, still I am excessively weak,

and cannot take the nourishment that is best for me.

"I cannot do with game or anything roasted, and am eating boiled stuff of various kinds.

"It has been a very severe attack, managed with great skill by Stevenson and Vose, but then seventy won't recruit like thirty-five.

"I may tell you that one friend of mine, outside my own family, I saw last Friday with the permission of Stevenson, as there were some very important business matters which it was quite necessary I should discuss with him.

"I have my four night watchers who sit up alternately, ten hours, with a servant in attendance : they are Harriet, Ellen, Alice, and Jane.

"Mrs. Laird, fortunately, by going to bed regularly, manages to keep pretty well, and is able to be with me all day, and, although I say it, I do not believe such a set of nurses ever existed ; and it has been unnecessary to call in any of those extraordinary people, hired nurses, who often do more harm than good. I am afraid, however, my nurses' occupation will continue all this month.

"To show you how careful I have to be I may

tell you I sat up yesterday for three quarters of an hour in an easy chair, and was upset all day afterwards, and any strange face among my own family, or those who are not always about me, takes more out of me than my regular attendants talking to me for half an hour at a time.

"I hope you will excuse my giving you such a plain answer to your request, which I know was made with the best feeling, but it is quite impossible for me to comply with it.

"Give my kindest regards to Mrs. Aspinall, whom I have always regarded as a model wife and mother, and a good staunch friend. Also remember me to the old lady, Mrs. Haselden, when you see her.—Yours faithfully,

"JOHN LAIRD."

"*P.S.*—About this time, I used to entertain distant visions of Duddon Heath, Ox Heyes, etc., but now I am afraid I shall be destined to hear a well-known voice say, 'John, the brougham is ready, and the doctor says you must take an airing'—what a coming down for an old sportsman!"

The fine statue of John Laird, erected by

public subscription in Hamilton Square Gardens, is a worthy monument of a noble and a beloved townsman. Oft, to me, does it recall the lines :

“And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill ;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still !”

CHAPTER XVII.

My Driving Tour in North Wales—A Pick-up for a Tired Horse—Birkenhead Churches—St. Mary's—Holy Trinity—St. Werburgh's Roman Catholic Chapel—Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel—The Speculative Churches—St. John's—St. Anne's—St. James'—Christ Church—The Rev. Andrew Knox—Mrs. Knox—The Rev. Dr. Knox—The Rev. Dr. Baylee and the Welsh Service; and St. Aidan's College; and the Author—The Rev. A. Spafford and Family—St. Paul's Church—"Something like a Bazaar"—Edward Dowling—Rat-Killing in St. John's Market.

ONE of the pleasantest driving tours I ever went was in 1847, a few weeks after my marriage. Starting from Birkenhead, we drove to Queen's Ferry, Holywell, St. Asaph, and Bangor; spent a happy time with some dear old friends at Plascelyn, Penmaenmawr; and returned in a week, driving through most beautiful scenery, *via* Bettws-y-Coed, Corwen, Llangollen, Wrexham, and Chester to Birkenhead. At one stage, we broke the journey for the night at Corwen; and were nearly devoured by

fleas: in fact, if they had all pulled one way, we should have been carried bodily from the room into the Dee. The weather was extremely hot; and my little horse showed signs of distress at Chester. While resting there, I gave him two quarts of ale, mixed with some warm gruel; and the remainder of our journey to Birkenhead he travelled as fresh and as merry as though he had just come out of his stable. Such warm, liquid food has a wonderful effect on a tired horse.

St. Mary's, commonly called the Parish Church, was the first place of worship built in modern Birkenhead. It was commenced by Francis Richard Price; and finished in 1824. I believe I was one of the first children to be christened there. The Rev. Mr. Newton, the first Incumbent, conducted his early services in the old Abbey; as St. Mary's was not quite completed. He had three services every Sunday: Birkenhead in the morning; Bidston in the afternoon; and Wallasey in the evening. The Rev. Andrew Knox, the second Incumbent, was, without doubt, a most conscientious man, beloved by all. He was among us to the day of his death; over half a century.

Holy Trinity was the next church built. It was then in the fields, with only a rough cart-way leading to it. Thomas Brassey and Hugh Williams were the builders. They presented the advowson to the Rev. Andrew Knox; who gave the living to the Rev. Dr. Baylee, with full right of future presentation.

About this time, St. Werburgh's Roman Catholic and the Brunswick Wesleyan Chapels were built. Then followed what were known as the speculative churches. These were built on land purchased by land speculators from Francis Richard Price; but left unfinished for some time owing to lack of funds. Among them were St. John's, St. Anne's, St. James', and Christ Church. A heavy figure was paid for the site of one of the speculative churches; and the church erected at a cost of some £12,000. It was eventually sold unfinished for £1200. Indeed, early Birkenhead was built and mortgaged and remortgaged three or four times over; and property is now in the hands of the third and fourth mortgagees; who have been compelled to take it over at a considerable loss.

Here I cannot deny myself the pleasure of

expressing my regard for one of the best women who ever lived in Birkenhead; viz., the dearly beloved wife of the Rev. Andrew Knox. Mrs. Knox was a Derby lady; and first became acquainted with her husband when he was a curate at Chesterfield. She was a noble example of a clergyman's wife; and her daughters have truly followed in the footsteps of their mother. My father and mother's family and the Knoxes were intimate friends in early years.

The present Incumbent of St. Anne's is the Rev. Dr. Knox, grandson of the Rev. Andrew Knox, and a worthy descendant.

As the population in the immediate vicinity of Holy Trinity increased, quite a large number of Welshmen settled in the neighbourhood. Dr. Baylee, a man of wonderful ability, and full of zeal in church matters, considered the Welshmen should have a service in their own language. The doctor, whose versatility was really remarkable, had taught himself eighteen different languages; the most difficult of which he considered Welsh. A small iron church was built opposite Holy Trinity. On the opening day, the doctor announced his intention of conducting

the whole service in Welsh. All went well ; and a crowded congregation of Welshmen were delighted until the Ten Commandments were reached ; when, by some unaccountable error, the worthy doctor's rendering omitted the word *not* from each of the Commandments—rather an essential element. The Welsh church prospered for many years ; and did much good in the parish.

Dr. Baylee founded St. Aidan's College. First, in Cambridge Terrace, Claughton ; where he took the entire row of houses for the purpose : afterwards, he obtained subscriptions, and erected the fine pile of buildings now forming the College. The present structure was designed by Henry Cole, architect, Birkenhead ; who worked hard with the doctor in carrying out his great undertaking.

In 1865, Birkenhead was not in a very flourishing condition ; and many public institutions as well as private individuals were more or less in financial difficulties. The Rev. Dr. Baylee called upon me in great trouble ; and informed me that he had some time before mortgaged the advowson of Holy Trinity ; and the mortgagee had threatened

him with legal proceedings, which might seriously damage the fair fame of the church. The total amount, including principal and arrears of interest, was £1250. After some thought, I told him that if he would bring me the deeds I would give him a cheque for £1250; conditionally that he would use all his interest and influence in conjunction with me to raise the amount by private subscription. This was done. Some friends and I gave £100 each; and the doctor collected the balance. I was appointed, together with four others, trustee of the church; and we handed the deeds over to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners absolutely free from debt.

Holy Trinity is one of the leading churches in the town. The present vicar, the Rev. A. Spafford, is a gentleman of great ability; and a most popular, faithful, and loving minister and disciple of his Master. His good wife ably seconds his efforts; and their painstaking work in the district is proverbial. Mrs. Spafford is an excellent wife, and a loving mother. They have three sweet little children.

The building of St. Paul's Church, situate at the corner of Argyle Street and Market Street,

was to a great extent initiated by me. The site was not a very good one; as the space available was but small: however, the situation precisely suited the district; which was much in need of a church. Thomas Brassey gave the land; but the real difficulty was to raise sufficient funds to erect the church. We therefore determined to hold a bazaar of a novel character on one of the glades leading to the lake in the lower Birkenhead Park. We had two large marquees; one for horticultural purposes, and the other for the sale of miscellaneous articles. The weather was piping hot; and the attendance was simply enormous. We had bands of music, and numerous entertainments. Altogether, we took £1500 in three days: no less than £500 was received for entrance fees. This was something like a bazaar; and unprecedented in Birkenhead. When the church was nearly finished, it was found that no arrangement had been made for a suitable organ. Under certain conditions, I offered to present an organ; which was accepted; and for many years, I believe, the organ did good service. When the church was enlarged, it was found necessary to place a larger

instrument in the sacred edifice. The present Incumbent, the Rev. Mr. Davies, is a hard-working, faithful minister ; and an exceptionally eloquent preacher. His church is largely attended morning and evening ; and he is working much good in the district.

The chief constable in Liverpool some years ago was Edward Dowling, well known, and highly respected. He resided in a very pretty villa, surrounded by a little plot of land or garden, situate on the Liverpool Flags, where the Liverpool and London and Globe offices now are. The main Bridewell was then on the opposite side of the Flags, on the site of the present Cotton Association offices.

St. John's Market, Liverpool, which in my young days was known as the New Market, has always ranked very high. I do not suppose there is a finer market in the country, not excepting Covent Garden. At one time, there was a cleansing and a rat-killing every one or two years. Everything movable was cleared out before the rat-killing ; and the market was afterwards cleaned and painted. Each person was allowed to take one dog of suitable size for rat-killing, usually

terriers and bull-terriers. The scene was most extraordinary. The rats were everywhere; and had to be beaten or driven out by every conceivable method. They literally swarmed. Thousands were killed; and the whole affair lasted for some hours.

Few now remember the old Fish Market in James Street, Liverpool. The present Liverpool Fish Markets in Great Charlotte Street are very fine; but the old market was a small shabby-looking place. The dealers, however, have always been noted for the quality of their fish and their moderate prices. No doubt, the market was located as near the river landing-piers as possible; for in those days all fish consumed in Liverpool was brought from the sea up the river; as there were then no railways or other mode of rapid inland communication.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Meet at Bidston Lighthouse—John Laird's Chestnut Mare—Horses and their Treatment—How to Ride and to Drive—Richard Barton, of Caldby Manor—Charles Stanley, of Denhall—The Birkenhead and Wirral Agricultural Society—Show at Claughton—A Famous Shropshire Pie—Post Office Resource—The Hooton Stanley Property—Sir William Stanley and Napoleon the Third—Our Visit to Paris—Banquets at the Café Philippe and the Café Trois Frères—My Wife and the Bonnet—The Author and the Cigars—Appalling Railway Accident—The Royal Rock Ferry Beagles—A Dangerous Compliment—Serious Omnibus Accident averted.

THE last time I was out hunting with Sir William Stanley's Hooton fox-hounds, we met at the Bidston Lighthouse; found a fox at once in the wood; ran straight across the meadows, over the brook for Upton; skirted the village; and on as hard as we could gallop to Grange Farm, West Kirby. Here our fox went to ground in a drain; where we left him.

I was riding a chestnut mare which belonged to John Laird. He asked me to ride her; as

she was too fat after the summer's rest ; and needed exercise. I fear I nearly killed her. She was a very hot-tempered animal (most chestnuts are) ; rash and fidgety ; a good fencer ; pulled hard ; but rushed too much at her fences. Strange to say, this mare never lay down, day or night. She rested herself in her loose box by leaning against the wall ; and evidently feared to lie down, lest she should slip when getting up.

Most horses are nervous. Nervousness is more common with them than vice. A horse runs away from fear or nervousness ; seldom from vice. Some horses are vicious ; but not naturally so ; rather from cruel treatment when young. A horse shies from fear, unless his sight is wrong. Kind and quiet treatment a horse loves. He ought never to be whipped either for shying or for running away. In the former case, coax him and talk to him ; in the latter, put a stronger bit in his mouth, and treat him patiently and kindly. A horse inclined to run away should never be driven except in double harness with a steady old wheeler alongside of him. Any horse which has once run away, especially, if

he has hurt himself, becomes nervous and is difficult to manage. Too much care cannot be exercised; and on no account drive him in single harness. My father never would drive a mare. He considered them skittish; and frequently unsafe in harness. His hunters were mostly Irish horses; the cleverest and the best hunters in the world. People cannot be too particular with horses. Never tease them; and on no account abuse them. A horse never forgets and seldom forgives an act of cruelty. Few men know more about horses than I do. I was, I may say, born and bred amongst horses and ponies. I rode when a child; and followed the hounds before I was twelve. I am a very good rider: in fact, I never saw a horse I couldn't or dare not ride. I love horses and ponies. All my children, five boys and five girls, can ride well. I taught them from childhood; and my first instructions were conveyed in few words. "Point your toes to the horse's nose. Sit well back: clip the saddle with both knees: be careful to keep your hands and reins down on the withers." So many riders turn their toes out; and have, in consequence, a dangerous

and a loose seat: also keep their hands up almost to their noses. Driving instructions as to "hands down" are equally necessary. How very few people who ride on horseback have an easy upright seat. Three accomplishments when learnt in early childhood are never forgotten, even though circumstances prevent practice: riding, swimming, and skating.

The hundred of Wirral used to abound with all kinds of game. Hares were most abundant in Birkenhead, where the park is now. There was also plenty of pond fishing, coursing, and shooting.

Richard Barton, of Caldly Manor, was an old shooting friend of mine. His estate was proverbial for close preserving; but he had no pheasants; as he had but few covers. Once, with five guns, he shot 120 hares in one day. Partridges were most plentiful. Richard Barton was an enthusiastic agriculturist; and president of the Wirral Farmers' Club, in which he took a warm interest. Caldly was a model farm.

The Wirral Farmers' Club was inaugurated by Charles Stanley, of Denhall, near Neston. It is now called the Birkenhead and Wirral

Agricultural Society ; and has a permanent locality at Bebington for the yearly meetings. After passing through many phases, the show has now reached almost gigantic proportions. In fact, it is one of the best shows in the country ; and exhibitors send their produce from all parts. The jumping of hunters has become very popular : in short, one of the most attractive portions of the show.

One fine Exhibition was held in a large field at Claughton, a few minutes from my residence at Claughton Hill ; where I lived for twelve years. As a vice-president of the show, I gave a general invitation ; not only to the president and the committee, but to many of my old farmer friends in the hundred of Wirral. We had a cold collation laid out in the dining-room ; which was of good dimensions ; and my servant man informed me at the end of the day that over eighty guests had visited the house and partaken of the repast.

Some little time before the show, my wife and I were on a visit to my old schoolmaster, Dr. Rowley, the Rector of Willey in Shropshire. One day at luncheon, we were

very much taken with a veal and ham pie; which was exceedingly delicious. On our return home, we thought we should like a similar pie placed on our table during the show day; but both of us had forgotten the name of the confectioner. All we knew was that the pie was made at Broseley. There was no time to write Dr. Rowley; so I addressed a communication to "the confectioner who makes the good pies," Broseley, Salop; and requested that a pie similar to the one supplied to Dr. Rowley, of Willey, should be made and forwarded to us on the following day. On the third day, it arrived; and in a very short time after the luncheon began, the pie was demolished.

Charles Stanley was a type of the fine old English gentleman. Had he but been heir to the Hooton baronetcy, there is little doubt that this, the oldest, branch of the Stanley family would to this day have been in possession of Hooton, and all the estates in the hundred. Such a splendid property it was, extending north, south, east, and west of Wirral, almost touching the town of Birkenhead!

Poor Sir William, as fine a looking man as

ever lived! Handsome, courteous, and kind to everyone. Not an atom of pride in his composition. His liberality and extravagance ruined him. When Sir Thomas, his father, died, and Sir William came into possession of the estates, everything was embarrassed, and in the hands of the money-lenders; for Sir William had practically forestalled his inheritance. His residence at Hooton Hall was of short duration. All the property was sold by auction; horses, hounds, everything. Nothing was spared. Sir William left England; and died within a few years in the Bois de Boulogne. Napoleon the Third paid him the kindest attention; but he never rallied from the cruel blow in having to leave his beautiful property in Cheshire.

I happened to be in Paris for a week when Sir William was ill and unfit to see any visitors; but I heard all about him from the physician to the British Embassy; at whose house my wife and I spent a very pleasant evening on the occasion of a brilliant entertainment.

Paris was very gay during those prosperous years. Napoleon and the Empress were living at the Tuilleries.

My wife and I stayed with our dear old friend, Thomas Brassey, at the Hotel Meuricy. Sir Joseph Locke, the great engineer, was also there; and a very good time we had. Dinner parties nearly every night. One at the Café Philippe I shall never forget. It was given by the French engineers to Thomas Brassey and Sir Joseph Locke. There were twenty-six courses; every delicacy in and out of season; over two hours at the table. Another dinner, at the Café Trois Frères, equally splendid, was given by Thomas Brassey, Sir Joseph Locke, and the French engineers to the ladies. I have been at many grand entertainments; but never, before or since, have I seen such elegance and refined beauty of arrangement.

An amusing incident occurred on our Sunday morning in Paris. My wife and I were at breakfast; when in came Sir Joseph, full of fun; as he always was. "Now; Mrs. Harry;" he said, "come with me as quickly as you can. I want to buy you the prettiest bonnet in Paris; and then to take you and Harry to the races." My wife in those days was in the prime of life, beautiful, and attractive. She was startled, in

fact, shocked, at the suggestion. She most courteously thanked Sir Joseph ; but declined either to accept a bonnet or to go to the races on a Sunday. "Why," she said : "I wouldn't go to the races on a Sunday if you offered me a thousand pounds." I remarked : "You might have the bonnet to-morrow ;" but she positively declined to accept it. However, the matter was amicably settled by our going for a very pleasant drive, followed by a quiet table d'hôte dinner.

After dinner, on the night of our arrival in Paris, I ordered a cigar, coffee, and cognac. The garçon brought me twenty-five cigars and a bottle of cognac. This rather astonished me ; but my friends joined me in the courtyard ; where we sat until late. Next evening, I found my cigars and cognac nearly gone ; so I ordered the garçon to bring me two bottles of cognac and fifty cigars ; and to charge them to my two friends ; who highly approved of my action.

We had a pleasant week ; during which we saw everything worth seeing ; little thinking that within the course of a few years the beautiful city of Paris would be in a state of siege ; and a scene of starvation, bloodshed, and misery.

Thomas Brassey built nearly all the French railways ; and Sir Joseph Locke was chief engineer. They also built the Austrian railways ; and the Emperor decorated Thomas Brassey with the "Iron Crown."

One of the saddest disasters in the annals of the British railway occurred between Abergele and Llandulas, on the Chester and Holyhead line. A few weeks before the accident, I was travelling to Birkenhead with Sir Richard Moon, the well-known chairman of the London and North-Western Railway Company, and my old friend, Thomas Brassey ; when, in course of conversation on railway travelling, the question of personal safety was broached. Sir Richard Moon remarked that he considered himself safer in a first-class carriage on the London and North-Western Railway system than in any other place. Shortly after this, some people, well known in society, after staying in Chester over night, took train by the Irish express, commonly known as the "Wild Irishman"; which carries first-class passengers only to Holyhead. No stop takes place by these trains between Chester and Holyhead. Between

Abergele and Llandulas are extensive lime quarries. Work was proceeding; when suddenly a waggon loaded with explosive petroleum broke loose from a siding; and ran away down the hill towards Abergele. Just at the very moment that the waggon was coming with full impetus down the incline, the Chester express rounded a curve and crashed into the waggon. The disaster was appalling in its suddenness. The oil casks burst; and in a very few seconds the locomotive and the first carriages of the train were enveloped in a dense, black smoke. When this had somewhat cleared away, of the engine-driver, fireman, and every soul in the first carriages, nothing was found but charred remains. Singular to say, the company never had a claim made upon them by any of the relatives of those killed. All the passengers were in a high position of life, and people of wealth. A monument in Abergele churchyard tells the pathetic story that the ashes of thirty-seven persons rest beneath the stone erected to their memory.

The Royal Rock Ferry Beagles were founded under bright auspices many years ago. They

proved a great success ; and gave considerable pleasure to numbers of old and young men engaged in business in Liverpool and Birkenhead ; who could enjoy one or two half-days each week in a most healthful and an inexpensive pursuit. The land-owners and farmers in the hundred of Wirral gave to the venture their hearty co-operation : went to great trouble in preserving hares ; and generally furthered to the best of their ability the interests of the sport. Fine, bracing sport it was, too. Colonel King, the Walfords, and Christopher Rawson were zealous supporters. I was one of the founders of the pack ; and enjoyed many good outings. The only drawback I ever found was, that, instead of having four good legs under me, I was compelled to trudge the country with the active pair given to me by nature. I am happy to say the pack is still in a prosperous condition.

One day, we were following a fox in what is known as a good, slow, hunting run. At length, I became aware that a gentleman's groom mounted on a very fine horse was riding behind me, dangerously near. This went on for

some time ; and, at last, the man followed me still more closely. I pulled up ; and signalled to him to stop ; which he did. In no good humour, I then told him that he must at once take another course ; and keep clear of me ; otherwise there would be trouble. The man was respectful enough ; touched his hat ; and said : “ I will do so, sir ; but I should like to tell you first, that my master, Mr. So-and-so ” (whom I hardly knew), “ gave me orders that in riding this young horse I was to follow you as near as possible wherever you went ; because you always rode straight.” “ Well,” said I, “ give my respects to your master ; and tell him I am very much obliged to him for the compliment ; but ask him to kindly refrain from offering me another in a similar form ; as it is a highly dangerous proceeding.”

An accident, which might have had serious consequences, occurred some years ago, when I was taking a short tour through North Wales, accompanied by my three youngest boys. The railway between Llanberis and Carnarvon was in course of construction ; and, until the final connection was made, passengers had to climb

the well-known hill from Carnarvon town ; and down from the summit in the direction of the Carnarvon Dock. We mounted an omnibus ; and took the four front seats. I was seated immediately behind the driver ; and a few minutes after starting down the hill I noticed that our speed was increasing ; and one of the horses appeared to me to be very unmanageable. I turned to the driver, quite a youth ; and asked him what was the matter. He turned very pale ; and said : " My rein is broken, sir ; and the horses are both beyond my control." Without hesitation, I took the reins out of his hands ; and, seeing that the offside horse's rein was not broken, pulled both horses as near as I could get to the small houses situate on the roadside ; in order that I might jam the wheels, and get the pole into one of the cottage windows. The horses were then really running away. My movement was instantly effective. The pole and the fore-wheels became jammed in the cottage wall ; the pole broke ; and down fell the two horses ; but the omnibus remained in its upright position. Immediate steps were taken to hold the horses down while the passengers

alighted. My boys and I jumped down and knelt upon the horses' heads. The passengers inside, although alarmed and shaken, were uninjured. Had we gone on but a very short distance further, we should have been precipitated into the Carnarvon Dock; as there is a sharp turn, which people who know the road will well remember. I met with quite an ovation when we drove up to the "Sportsman's Arms;" whence a carriage had been sent to convey us from the scene of the accident.

An old hunting friend, to whom I related this incident, said: "Harry; if you had not been an old hunting-man, you would have never thought of doing what you did." Hunting teaches a man self-reliance; as when riding across country he has nothing but his own resources to depend upon.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Haighs — Washington Jackson — Driving Tandem — The Brocklebanks — The Cheshire Hounds — Cheshire as a Hunting Country — Sir Watkin Wynne's Hounds — Charles Pain — A Crack Run from Royalty Gorse — Johnny Walker — Johnny Coupland — Joe Maiden — "Casting Forward *v.* Casting Backward" — James Fairrie — Earl Grosvenor in the Dee — The "Cheeryble Brothers" — In Wettenhall Brook — A Mysterious Gallop — The Flight of Woodcocks at Hawarden — A Day's Shoot — "Alma" — Edwards, the Huntsman — A Neck and Neck Race — A Grand Hunting Run.

HUNTING, I always think, closely resembles the wonderful institution of freemasonry; in that it so frequently engenders a lifelong intimacy.

Among my dear old hunting friends are the Haighs, of Elm Hall, Wavertree; also of Tarporley, Cheshire. Edwin Haigh was my school-fellow; and afterwards a close hunting friend in Cheshire. His brother, Reggy, was a nice fellow; sad to say, he died quite recently, very suddenly. Washington Jackson was a

close acquaintance of mine ; well known and respected on the Liverpool Cotton Exchange. He speculated largely and successfully during the great American Civil War ; and, at different times, offered to make my fortune ; but, fearing the speculation might go the wrong way, I declined his offers. I visited Washington Jackson at his Tarporley residence. He had some fine horses ; and was very fond of fox-hunting. On one of my visits, Edwin Haigh was also a guest at the house. One night, it was arranged we should drive the following morning from Tarporley to Hartford. Our conveyance was a handsome dog-cart, which belonged to Washington Jackson ; and a tandem team. The wheeler was a steady, harness horse ; and belonged to Jackson ; while the leader was a well-bred, skittish little horse, called the "Dancing - Master," owned by Edwin Haigh. The leader was a dancer in every sense of the word ; and a very difficult horse to handle ; as he was fond of jibbing ; and had a disquieting trick of turning round at odd moments to look at one : rather an awkward fault for a leader in a tandem. On the morning of our journey, Jackson said he couldn't drive tandem ; Haigh

said *he* couldn't; so they voted that Harry (that was I) should drive. Now, it so happened that I knew next to nothing about driving tandem; but it was Hobson's choice: either I had to drive, or there was no hunting that day. However, my nerves were always strong; and I never saw a horse I couldn't manage. Our sixteen mile drive was got over very quickly; as, when I once got the "Dancing-Master" straight, I took jolly good care that he had no chance and no time to look behind him at me. Our return journey, we covered in little over an hour, after a thoroughly enjoyable day.

"We have seen a run together;
We have ridden side by side:
It binds us to each other;
Like a bridegroom to his bride."

Ralph Brocklebank, of Haughton Hall, Tarporley, is a man of considerable wealth; who liberally dispenses it. He is a leading Director of the London and North-Western Railway Company; and has been for some years. He is fond of hunting, and the other sports of a country gentleman. The Cheshire churches sound his praises; and justly so. Thomas

Brocklebank, a younger brother of Ralph's, resides at Heswall. Recently, he was High Sheriff for the County of Chester; which office he filled with great honour to the county, and infinite credit to himself. His wife is a charming woman; full of kindly feeling; fond of good works; and verily a noble right hand to her good husband; whose hospitality is proverbial. Their second son, Eric, is a well-known character; of lofty stature, a fine horseman, and perhaps the most daring rider in the county of Chester. He was fortunate enough, only a few years ago, to marry a most delightful young lady; so, like many other hard riding fox-hunters, Eric has had to curb his cross-country pace to meet the loving anxiety of his wife. The picture of a young wife and children looking at a helpless figure lying in a deep Wirral ditch is surely enough to make even young Nimrod look before he leaps!

I have always considered that the best pack of hounds in England, taking them all round, is the Cheshire. The County is peculiarly well-suited for hunting; owing to the immense acreage of grass land, commonly called cheese

country ; while the exceptional moisture in most districts is favourable for grass growing, and for what is known as "good scent." In fact, many of the best scenting days in Cheshire have been when the ground was so moist that it was fetlock deep in slush. Some of the finest and most daring horsemen in the world have hunted with the Cheshire hounds.

Sir Watkin Wynne's celebrated pack of hounds was piloted for some years by that grand old horseman, Johnny Walker ; whose name is renowned ; followed by Charles Pain, of the Pytchley.

I shall never forget the run from Royalty Gorse ; when Johnny Coupland, Johnny Walker, and I galloped six miles in twenty minutes without a check. Nearly one hundred men were out ; but only our three selves were in at the finish. My horse was only a young one ; and very nearly broke his own neck and mine too ; for he fell head over heels at the last three fences. After this run, Johnny Coupland and I presented Johnny Walker with a beautiful silver hunting-flask, inscribed : "Royalty Gorse. Six miles in twenty minutes ; a bumper." Johnny

Walker told me that for many years he never went out without this flask; nor should he while he continued to hunt.

Very few of my readers will remember Joe Maiden, for many years, the champion huntsman with the Cheshire. The master used to say that Maiden wanted no hounds; 'as he seemed to scent his fox from first to last: but I have heard (it was rather before my time when he was in his glory) that he would cast his hounds over a dozen fields on spec; and seldom or never failed to be right. This is what is known as "casting forward." Some huntsmen make a great mistake by "casting backward"; which almost invariably spoils a run.

James Fairrie, of Chester, is an old hunting friend of mine: he loves his hunting to this day. Steady-going and old-fashioned he always was and always will be. Nothing pleases him better than to "tool" quietly along; mounted on a weedy hunter, with a single snaffle. Horse and man always thoroughly understand each other. The country could well do with more men like James Fairrie.

When Earl Grosvenor was master of the

Cheshire hounds, and lived at Calveley, he was nearly drowned in the Dee. The fox crossed the river at a very dangerous point. The hounds followed in full cry; and ran into him a few fields forward. Earl Grosvenor, a good rider, always well up, made for a ford hard by. Bolton Littledale hit the ford exactly; and got well across, his horse almost on the swim. The master missed the exact spot; and in his horse went overhead with him. However, the Earl got clear of his horse; and struck out. The river was pretty full, and a rapid stream. Several fellows threw off their coats intending to jump in to the rescue. I and two or three others tied our hunting-whips together; Earl Grosvenor seized hold of this improvised rope as we threw it to him; and in a few moments he was safe on the bank. I made him empty my flask of brandy; and got him off to the nearest farmhouse; where I stripped him; rubbed him down; and folded him in blankets until his dry clothes arrived. He soon rode home none the worse. His horse swam to a landing-place; and got out all right. This was some years ago; but I have no doubt the popular and much loved

master of the Cheshire hounds, now the Duke of Westminster, will well remember the incident.¹

Earl Grosvenor was an exceptional man; of equable temper; gentle, and courteous to all; an ideal English nobleman and gentleman. I knew him well. He was so respected on the hunting-field that, whereas a master of hounds commonly uses many rough expressions, a wave of Earl Grosvenor's hand had far more effect at all times. He was a remarkably bold rider; with a perfect seat and hands, essential qualities many hunting men do not possess. It is a trait of the Westminster family. All are good horsemen. "Lord Dick," as we used to call Lord Richard Grosvenor (now Lord Stalbridge) rode well to hounds. Earl Grosvenor and he were inseparable. We used to call them the "Cheeryble Brothers."

When Sir A. B. Walker was living at Darnhall, the hounds met at his house; when he hospitably gave us a breakfast. We found close to the house; and rattled through Darnhall Woods and Wettenhall. Behrens, a Manchester

¹ I regret to say that since these words were penned the good Duke has gone over to the majority.

man, and a really good sportsman, followed me into Wettenhall brook ; where we went overhead ; and got out like half-drowned rats. However, we soon got a change of clothes ; and were none the worse. The hounds ran the Darnhall fox straight away towards Tilston ; over the canal at Bunbury locks ; skirted Bunbury village ; through Spurstow to Ridley Wood and the Breeches ; but not one of a large field was with them : neither master, nor whips, nor men. The pack ran almost mute ; and no one overtook them until they got to Ridley Wood, not far from Cholmondley.

Sir Stephen Glynn, the owner of the Hawarden property, used to let off the shooting on the estate ; which was strictly preserved and afforded good sport. One year, the shooting was taken by Sir James Poole (known on 'Change as Jimmy Poole), Jimmy Campbell, and my brother, Joe. Late one evening, the following telegram came to my brother from Griffiths, the Hawarden head gamekeeper : "A flight of woodcocks has just settled in the woods. Come as early as possible in the morning ; and bring two or three good guns." My brother at once sent word to

his two friends; and the three started for Hawarden by the first train next morning. The woodcock is not game, but a bird of passage. On alighting, woodcocks spread themselves out in ones and twos: near small streams is a favourite spot. The friends divided into three parties; and, in the course of the day, shot no fewer than fifty birds: indeed, they cleared the woods of the whole flight. This feat, I believe, constitutes a record. Of the three friends, Sir James Poole is the only one now living. He is greatly respected in Liverpool. May he long be spared!

Just about the time of the Crimean War, I bought a beautiful mare in Ireland, nearly thoroughbred; and called her "Alma." I rode her with a double rein, and smooth snaffle bit and martingale; the favourite hunting-bridle of the fast-riding Irishmen, especially the steeple-chase riders. I hunted with this mare for three or four years; and then sold her to my friend, Johnny Coupland. He begged me to let him have "Alma"; which I did; although I was loth to part with her; but, singular to relate, after he had ridden her a season, she began

to make mistakes ; which she had never done with me. It was then discovered she was nearly blind. She was sold to a hunting-man ; who thought he could cure her ; but she went stone blind ; and he parted with her for a few pounds. For some years, she ran in a four-wheeled cab in Liverpool. She was a splendid-looking animal at her best ; and a wonderful negotiator of deep, heavy land. The rise and fall of race-horses and hunters are not very different in character from the rise and fall of their owners, after all !

I once rode in what is known as a " racing run " from Crow's Nest to Darnhall ; a regular clipper ; thirty-five minutes without a check. Edwards, the huntsman, and I were standing all ready at the south-east corner of the well-known cover near Tattenhall Station. We were close to the gorse fence. The rest of the field were at the other end of the cover with the master. I was on " Alma " ; and Edwards on a fine grey horse, a wonderful fencer and galloper. Edwards suddenly whispered : " Mr. Aspinall ; there he is ! " Sure enough, a fine fox quietly sneaked out of cover ; and stood for a moment,

with his ears pointed, and his brush straight out, listening to the music of the hounds on his scent in the gorse. Quickly making up his mind, he gave his brush a defiant wag ; and away he went across the field pointing south. Edwards had a moment before remarked : " Mr. Aspinall ; you have often said you could beat me in 'a fast run. Now, sir ; we are both well mounted. Don't move until he has gone well over the second fence. Now then ! view halloo ! gone away ! " and he blew his horn like mad. In a moment, every hound was out of cover close before us ; the fox two fields ahead ; grand scent. We galloped side by side. Edwards said : " We are in for a sneezer, sir. He is pointing for Darnhall or Wettenhall ; and, no doubt, knows his way." Oh, what a gallop ! Some of our crack riders missed the start ; and never caught us. Edwards and I went neck and neck. Our horses never made a mistake ; we nursed them all we could ; and when the fox was run into close to Darnhall, our gallop ended in a dead heat.

CHAPTER XX.

My Portrait—Extract from *The Liverpool Leader*, April 10th, 1875—Growth of Birkenhead—The Author as “Member for the Approaches”—The Birkenhead Commissioners and the Dock Board—Free Ferry for Birkenhead—My Public Motto—Woodside Ferry—The Advantages of a Forward Policy—Free Life Passes—George Harrison—The First Ferry-Steamer *Cheshire*—Woodside Ferry and the Mersey Tunnel Competition—John Jones & Sons—Jones & Potts—The Fate of the *Lotty Sleigh*—Liverpool Landing-Stage on Fire—The Ferry-Steamer *Cheshire* as Landing-Stage—The Epicures Deceived.

THE portrait of the writer on the opposite page appeared in *The Liverpool Leader*, a weekly journal devoted to politics, literature, and criticism, on Saturday, April 10th, 1875. About 20,000 copies of the issue were sold. The Journal contained the following notice:—

H. K. ASPINALL, ESQ., BIRKENHEAD.

“During the whole career of Birkenhead as a township, no public man, with the single ex-



1875.

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ception of the late John Laird, has served it more zealously and successfully than has the chairman of its Ferry Committee, whose portrait is presented with to-day's Liverpool Leader.

"Henry Kelsall Aspinall is emphatically a Birkenhead man. The son of the late Mr. John Aspinall, who was one of the earliest residents in that now populous locality, and was an intimate friend of Mr. Laird, he was born there in 1824, has resided there ever since, was during many years one of its leading tradesmen, and has always laboured earnestly and intelligently to make it 'the city of the future.' He was educated at Bridgnorth, in Shropshire; and in 1840 was apprenticed to the Liverpool engineering firm of Fawcett, Preston, & Co., who, when the steamship President first sailed from the Mersey, sent him in her to gain information in the engine-room. She was lost on her third voyage, but Mr. Aspinall was not then on board.

"Soon after attaining his majority in 1845, he commenced business as a brewer in Birkenhead, in which vocation he was during many years largely engaged, also becoming the owner of

various public-houses, and largely exporting bottled and draught beer. He is understood to have prospered abundantly. In 1865, he sold his brewery and business to a joint-stock company, and subsequently purchased a brewery in Wrexham, which he still conducts.

"In 1854, he was elected a Commissioner of Birkenhead, which honour he has since retained without intermission, being re-elected whenever he presented himself before the ratepayers. From the outset he served with distinction on the Ferry Committee, where he was a chief agent in forming the universally admired ferry approaches, and in placing the large saloon boats on the station. Indeed, this department of the Commissioners' work has become his hobby, so much so that in 1867 he was elected chairman of the Committee, and to retain the post has repeatedly declined to be elected chairman of the Board of Commissioners. We believe, however, that he will ere long resign it, as he contemplates removing entirely to Wrexham.

"Mr. Aspinall is exceedingly popular in Birkenhead, where his business faculties and oratorical power are greatly esteemed; and when,

after Mr. John Laird's death, he came forward as a candidate for the representation of the borough, his prospect of success was bright, although his action divided the Conservative party. He was persuaded, however, to withdraw from opposition to Mr. David MacIver, who was supported by the Conservative managers on this side of the Mersey, and the party were thus enabled to achieve a decisive victory over Mr. Samuel Stitt."

Bidston Hill, where foxes, hares, rabbits, and all kinds of game once abounded, is gradually becoming a place of residence for Liverpool merchants. Flaybrick Hill Cemetery was made by the Birkenhead Commissioners some thirty-five years ago. Birkenhead itself, once an agricultural district, has during the last fifty years grown into a town of some 110,000 people. Although not possessing a cathedral, it is a city of note occupied by "no mean citizens."

Years ago, when a leading member of the Birkenhead Commissioners and chairman of the Woodside Ferry Committee, I was determined to carry out a much needed improvement in the condition of the approaches to the landing

stages on the Birkenhead and the Liverpool sides of the river. I was strongly and influentially supported in my resolution by John Laird, M.P.; was ultimately successful; and was accordingly dubbed in the Liverpool newspapers, "Member for the Approaches." We spent a large sum of money in widening the leading approach to the ferry entrance; improving the ferry buildings and offices; making broad footpaths; and providing glass roofs and covering down to the stage; in fact, to the gangways, including weather protection for passengers. We then approached the Liverpool authorities; and urged them to provide the girders and bridges in Liverpool with glass roofs. On our first application, the Dock Board, alleging that the obligation rested with us as ferry owners, positively declined to spend any more money on the Liverpool side. At length, our repeated appeals were successful; and the Board covered in the bridges with glass roofs; and afterwards erected shelters. The approaches from Water Street, James Street, etc., were also improved; so that the Ferry Committee had the satisfaction of seeing



WOODSIDE FERRY APPROACHES IN THE 'FORTIES.—*Page 238.*

their views carried out on both sides of the Mersey.

Sir William Jackson and I used our utmost endeavours to finance a rate on Liverpool and Birkenhead to enable us to make the ferry free ; but, largely in consequence of the opposing interests of the Lancashire and the Cheshire municipalities, we found the problem too difficult to solve. 'Tis a question well worth consideration now. Even by making Woodside a half-penny ferry, the population of the borough would soon be doubled ; and the traffic between Wirral and Liverpool increased to an enormous extent. My public motto always was : "The Ferry is to make Birkenhead ; not Birkenhead to make the Ferry."

I remember when the ferry toll was 3d. ; and the reduction to 2d. was strenuously opposed. However, shortly after the 2d. fare was adopted, our receipts were doubled ; and when, after a hard and most determined fight, we carried the penny fare, and were almost hooted out of office, the takings for passengers began to increase ; and very soon amounted to almost incredible monthly additions. Houses and shops increased in value ;

and our most virulent opponents admitted their error ; and congratulated us on our success. Year by year the ferry prospered ; receipts constantly increased ; and we paid at times as much as £17,000 to the Town Treasury towards the rates. Low fares mean large receipts. The public go where they can travel at the lowest possible charge. At different times, I urged upon my fellow Commissioners the advisableness of offering free ferry life passes to the head of each family or householder rated on the township books at £35 a year and upwards. Possibly, this may sooner or later be carried out.

George Harrison for many years took a warm interest in town work ; and at one time was chairman of the Woodside Ferry Committee. He was mainly instrumental with me in introducing the large ferry-steamers ; the first of which was the *Cheshire* ; built by Lawrence, of Liverpool, after the design of the Forth Railway steamers. This was an entire departure from the then existing ferry-steamers. The *Cheshire* carried more than double the number of passengers ; and cost double the amount to work. Some of the old heads on the



THE FIRST WOODSIDE FERRY SALOON STEAMER *CHESHIRE*.—Page 240.

Board of Commissioners opposed us right and left. However, our traffic continued to increase; larger boats were essential; and, after many months' fighting, we obtained a majority of votes in our favour, and carried the resolution. The *Cheshire* was ordered; and placed on the station. She met with such success that two similar boats, the *Woodside* and the *Lancashire*, were ordered; and built on the Thames by J. C. Mare. Then followed the *Birkenhead*; built by Evans, Liverpool; and a fifth, the *Cloughton*; built in Glasgow, by Henderson.

When the Mersey Tunnel was opened, there was a serious drop in the Woodside Ferry receipts; so it was considered necessary to arrange for smaller steamers, more rapid sailings, and more economical coal consumption. The management is admirable. I may truthfully assert that for the last fifty years Woodside Ferry has been the best managed ferry in the world. The two twin-screw boats, built by John Jones & Sons, ship-builders, Liverpool, and inaugurated by T. H. Jackson, then chairman of the Ferry Committee, continue to work admirably and economically. They are good models; and fine sea boats.

I may say, in passing, that John Jones, father of Charles Jones, resided for many years in Hamilton Square. I had the pleasure of his acquaintance when I was young, and he, the head of the firm, Jones & Potts, locomotive engineers, near Warrington. A more agreeable man and neighbour never lived. His son, James, of whom I cannot speak too highly, was one of our most respected Town Councillors. He was killed on the railway, near Southport, some years ago. His loss was greatly felt.

In 1865, an alarming accident occurred on the Mersey; which might have resulted in serious loss of life. An outward-bound sailing-ship had, in accordance with port regulations, taken on board about fifteen tons of gunpowder for export. When ready for sea, the vessel, by some unaccountable means, took fire. The flames soon assumed such dimensions that the captain and the crew determined to leave the ship; and warned vessels lying near of the inevitable result. The utmost anxiety prevailed on both the Liverpool and the Birkenhead shores. Thousands of people watched and waited for the finale. The fire reached the magazine at

about 7.30 P.M.; when there was a terrific report; and the vessel was blown to pieces and sunk. All the houses facing the river were severely shaken; and nearly every pane of glass was smashed. I was residing at Claughton Hill. Our dining-room faced the river to the east. We were at dinner; when suddenly we all felt a vibration as though the large plate-glass windows were bursting open—a most peculiar sensation—but the distance from the river, two miles, was too great for any danger of breakage. Such was the fate of the *Lotty Sleigh*. This was an ill wind which blew somebody good; for the glaziers reaped a plentiful harvest.

Another extraordinary accident took place on the Liverpool side of the river. A large landing-stage in course of construction took fire; and was utterly destroyed. It blazed for many hours, with no possible chance of being extinguished. The smoke was so dense, with a slight westerly breeze, that no one could approach the pier-head for hours. The timber used in the construction of the stage was all creasoted: hence it burnt savagely; and the densest and most suffocating smoke issued therefrom. My family

ascended the roof of our house; which faced the stage; and watched the fire for hours. It looked as though the entire frontage of Liverpool were ablaze. The chairman of the Dock Board, William Langton, was spending the evening on the Edge Hill cricket ground. A telegram from the dock office was handed to him. He said at once: "Impossible! It must be a hoax!" I was chairman of the Woodside Ferry Committee. A wire was sent to Chester; where I had gone on business. Although I did not believe the report, I hastened to Birkenhead and crossed to Liverpool. We had many hundreds of passengers waiting for means of transit to their homes. I at once ordered the steamer *Cheshire* to be run ashore; and on to the old Ellesmere basin steps. With planks and other appliances, a handy and a safe landing-stage, clear of the smoke, was soon rigged up. We carried some hundreds of passengers safely across the river; although many people were so alarmed and excited that they preferred to travel by rail, round by Warrington and Chester to Birkenhead.

Some years ago, when I resided in Ashfield

Road, in a house overlooking the upper lake, I was on the Road Committee which controlled the management of the park. Numbers of wild ducks then laid their eggs and reared their young in the park. Sometimes the birds would migrate and be absent for weeks or months; and as suddenly come back, whence no one could tell. However, the policeman in charge of the park had instructions from the Committee, at intervals when the ducks were there, to shoot one or two; and send them to each member of the Committee by turns. The outcome of this was that we had social dining-parties; at which the principal dish was the park wild ducks; which were always very carefully cooked. On one occasion, a few days before we had arranged a dinner-party at my house, the officer called to say that the ducks had disappeared; and he had only been able to shoot one. We were to have had a couple. My wife was at first rather put about as to where she was to get a substitute for the missing duck. I told her to leave it to me; which she did. I promptly ordered from a poulterer a tame duck very similar in size and shape to the wild one. My wife and I agreed

that both the wild and the tame ducks should be cooked and served as wild ducks ; and we determined not to disclose the facts until the ducks were eaten. In due time, my friends arrived. My wife and I had great difficulty in preserving our gravity while I was carving the ducks. Mr. Hind and Mr. Stubbs were connoisseurs ; so, by way of a joke, I helped them from the tame duck. The birds were pronounced excellent in every way ; and my friends declared they had never eaten such delicious wild ducks before. I then gave the history of the ducks ; which caused much merriment. The tale leaked out ; and my friends were chaffed for many a long day.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Author as Town Commissioner—As Chairman of the Woodside Ferry Committee—The Town Commissioners and the Dock Board—The New Woodside Ferry By-Law—Accident at Woodside Ferry—The Author before the Court—The Birkenhead Docks—The Dock Company and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board—Birkenhead Docks as a Terminus for the Manchester Ship Canal—Strike of Woodside Ferry Employees averted—Captain Blower—The Mersey Ferries and Ferry-Men—The Woodside Ferry Record—My Public Life—My Wife and Daughters' Social Work.

DURING my public life, I was seven times offered the position of chairman of the Board of Commissioners. This was tantamount to what is now the office of Mayor. I declined ; for the simple reason that much of the time I was a Commissioner I was chairman of the Ferry Committee ; and the ferry was the most important property possessed by the township. I took a great interest in my work ; and my efforts were encouraged by the fact that our revenue increased yearly in a wonderful manner. The ferry receipts

when I was first elected chairman of the Ferry Committee were about £25,000. They increased to some £47,000 before I resigned. While a Birkenhead Commissioner, I was a member of the Parliamentary Committees ; which were very numerous. Our excellent law clerk, Ambrose Waln, conducted the public business with great ability. We had many sparring matches with the Dock Board ; but in almost every instance our views and desires were courteously met. Though we had many wrangles, none of them ever degenerated into a quarrel.

Soon after I was elected chairman of the Woodside Ferry Committee, the passenger traffic increased rapidly ; but the public would persist in jumping on to the bulwarks and on to the landing-slip before the boat was securely fastened by the ropes. The consequence was that many accidents happened ; and, in addition, the boatmen were very much hampered in their duty of handling the ropes. After much opposition from some of my fellow-committee men, who considered we had no right to interfere with the liberty of the subject, I got a resolution passed ; and instructed the law clerk to frame a by-law

prohibiting passengers from embarking or disembarking until the gangway was secure under a penalty of 40s. and costs.

I was immediately influenced to take this step owing to an accident of which I was an eye-witness. A nice young fellow, who resided with his parents in Hamilton Square, jumped on to the bulwarks as the steamer approached the slip on the Cheshire side ; and fell headlong into the water. Happily, he was rescued and taken home ; but the effects of the immersion brought on an illness, culminating in consumption, from which he died.

Many ludicrous scenes occurred until the passengers became educated to the new by-law. The first passenger to be fined was the Author. We had just placed on the station the first large new saloon steamer, the *Cheshire*, the deck and gangway of which were almost flush with the deck of the George's stage. I was returning from Liverpool ; and, being rather late, hurried across the stage with a friend just as the landing-gangway was thrown up. Without a thought, I walked on board the steamer over the bulwarks. My friend did the same. Instantly, I heard someone, who was standing near, say : " Why, there

is the chairman of the Ferry Committee ; he has just broken the new by-law." On arriving at Woodside, I proceeded to the manager's office ; and requested him to have the case fully reported by the captain of the boat ; and to send me a summons. Mr. M'Elvie was our manager ; one of the best and most practical men we ever had. At first, he declined to summon me ; but I insisted upon it ; and appeared in due course before the Bench. Sir William Jackson was chairman ; indeed, most of the justices were personal friends of mine. The chairman, full of fun, noticing I had not gone into the prisoner's box, called out : " Prisoner ; you will please step into the box until this case is over." I obeyed orders ; and when the witnesses had been called, I was asked whether or not I was guilty. I pleaded " guilty ;" and was fined the mitigated penalty of 20s. and costs. The incident was fully reported by the press ; and caused great amusement. It was said I had done it on purpose in order to impress upon the public the necessity of abandoning so foolish a practice. Singular to relate, the next two men to be fined for breaking the by-law were the chairman of the

Board of Commissioners, William Hind, who jumped on a boat in order to catch a train to Chester, and George Harrison, another of our Commissioners. Both these gentlemen submitted with good grace. The by-law has now worked admirably for a great number of years.

When the Birkenhead docks were first contemplated in 1844, the capital fixed by the Dock Company was considered ample for all purposes ; but it was soon discovered that a very much larger capital would have to be found if the undertaking were to be satisfactorily completed. However, progress was made, interspersed with vicissitudes. Eminent contractors had to do with the work ; but, from circumstances over which they had no control, the undertaking was abandoned for a considerable time. Eventually, all the assets were sold by the Company to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. The price fixed by the arbitrators was, I believe, about 12s. 6d. in the pound ; but I do not think it was very satisfactory to the purchasers to have to pay so large an amount. G. F. Lyster, the engineer to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, did not carry out the original plans ; as he considered they

would not be conducive to the profitable working of the undertaking. Further, he did not think the permanent solidity of the work had been sufficiently provided for by those who had, in the first instance, prepared the specifications. The graving docks are probably superior to any other in the kingdom. They are the work of G. F. Lyster.

I have long thought that it would have been much more advantageous to the town had the Birkenhead Docks been sold to the Manchester Corporation. A ship canal from Manchester, with its terminus at the Birkenhead Docks, would have been a grand undertaking; one which would have materially added to the progress and prosperity of the Wirral side of the Mersey.

In the 'sixties, during my chairmanship of the Woodside Ferry Committee, an incident occurred which might have seriously dislocated our ferry arrangements. One morning, the manager reported that he had heard we were on the eve of a great strike; as all the employees at the north and the south ferries had agreed to strike for higher wages, provided the Woodside men would join.

A strike would have been far more serious for us than for any of the other ferries ; as in fine weather we carried far and away the bulk of the traffic ; and in thick, foggy weather our boats were the only ones permitted to ply. Naturally, my desire was to devise means by which to avert the trouble. Time was of first importance ; as our men were on the point of making known their decision. I promptly told the manager to request the attendance at the Ferry Committee-Room of our Commodore Captain, Commodore Mate, and Chief Engineer at an early hour of the afternoon. I gave them a few hours' notice ; as I wished to see my colleagues in the interim and obtain power to settle the matter that day. The men attended. They knew me well ; and I each of them. Further, I believe, they felt considerable respect for me ; in fact, I know they did ; as at many times I had it in my power to assist them. The manager also attended ; and we sat down and quietly discussed the situation. I asked the men to state their grievance ; how many of the ferry employees had been consulted ; and whether they had any proposals to make. Further, I laid it down

emphatically that any decision we might arrive at must be permanent; and that they must assure me they had full power delegated to them to settle on behalf of their comrades all the different points in dispute. First, there was the question of wages. Then, the number of hours on duty. Next, the recreation to be granted in the shape of a yearly holiday. These points enumerated, I said: now that you have stated what you want, I require your positive assurance that, in the event of my offering you acceptable terms, you will countenance no further agitation. What the other ferries did was no concern of mine. The increase of wages I proposed was small. It was at once accepted. The hours of duty, including Sunday work, were settled with little discussion. Now; I said, I will make one of the most liberal offers ever made to a ferry employee. In future, each man in our employ shall have fourteen days' entire holiday every year; for which time he will be paid his full amount of wages. The men were surprised and pleased; smiled all over; insisted upon shaking my hand; and promised me faithfully they would never listen to another strike pro-

posal from an outside source. The Board of Commissioners were much pleased at the result of my efforts. It is interesting to note that the holiday does not cost the ferry a shilling; since the men get the time in batches spread over the year; and each man's place is filled up in his absence by a fellow-workman, who simply works an additional hour or so in the twenty-four.

Captain Blower is a well-known and a highly respected Woodside Ferry employee; for some time past in charge of one of the goods boats. During his experience, he has saved from drowning in the river Mersey no fewer than fifty persons. He was always a most fearless man. In fact, he will go into the water, no matter whether the river be rough or smooth, either by night or by day, if necessity call him. It is quite sufficient for Captain Blower to hear that anyone is in danger of drowning; when, without removing any of his clothing, he will quietly drop into the water; and, in nine cases out of ten, rescue the person in danger. He has been warned over and over again not to risk his own life. His reply is always: "It makes no difference to me whether I'm in danger

or not. I have sufficient confidence in my own powers in the water to enable me to do what I consider my duty." Owing to the great increase in population, and the rush and pressure of modern conditions which give people neither time nor inclination to think of anything or anyone outside their own immediate concerns, Captain Blower is not now so well known as formerly. But, if anybody deserved immortalising, it is he!

Here I may remark what a splendid body of men the ferry-seamen are. I allude to all the ferries on the river. The duty of the ferry-seamen is often a dangerous one; but it is invariably done with infinite credit. Millions of people are carried across the Mersey every year in perfect safety. The remark, so frequently made by Charles MacIver, that the Cunard Company occupies the proud position of never having lost a life, is equally applicable to the Woodside Ferry. *We* have never lost a life; and for many years we have carried over eleven millions of people every twelve months. The remarkable skill, coolness, and judgment exercised alike by officers and by men are worthy

of the highest praise. In spite of the enormous traffic, collisions seldom occur; and the green and the red sidelights make the navigation as safe and as sure in the darkness of the night as it is in broad daylight.

For upwards of twenty years, I was an active public man; full of zeal for all movements and measures calculated to advance the well-being of my native town. Indeed, I may safely say, without undue egotism, that, with the single exception of John Laird, M.P., no man has done more to advance the interests of Birkenhead than did I during so many of the best years of my life. As a matter of fact, I devoted too much time to public affairs; and sacrificed my own financial interests in furthering the welfare of the town I loved so well. As a result, it has been my lot to pass through many vicissitudes. I have done many foolish things; but *never* a shabby one. I have made many mistakes; but the man who never runs the risk of making a mistake is generally the man who never makes anything. Still, after all, life has for each its own compensations! At the age of nearly four-score years, I am wonderfully active,

strong, and vigorous; and it may be that I have now in store a spell of easier work and less anxiety.

A brief record of the various offices I have filled may prove not uninteresting:—

Twenty years on the Birkenhead Board of Commissioners.

Twenty years Member of the Ferry Committee.

Eight years Chairman of the Ferry Committee.

Life Governor of the Birkenhead Hospital.

Trustee of the Birkenhead Borough Hospital.

Trustee of the Birkenhead Savings Bank.

Manager, Holy Trinity Schools.

Churchwarden, Holy Trinity Church.

Trustee of Holy Trinity Church.

A Vice-President of the Birkenhead Agricultural Society.

Founder and Manager of the Birkenhead Preparatory School.

A Founder and Life Member of the Birkenhead Park Cricket Club.

A Founder of, and Subscriber to, the Royal Rock Ferry Beagles.

Trustee of the Licensed Victuallers' Benevolent Society.

A Grand Juror for the County of Chester ;
appointed in the 'fifties.

Member of the Mersey Yacht Club.

Member and Coxswain of the well-known
Crusader Rowing Club.

President of the Upton Friendly Society
(Upton Club).

President of the Grange Club.

President of the West Kirby Friendly Society.

Whatever my own shortcomings may be, and
your perfect man is still far to seek, one thing I
can place on record with confidence ; and that is
the social work of my wife and daughters ; whose
pure, unselfish, and loving labours among the
poor have brought light and happiness into many
a wretched home.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Author as Conservative Candidate for Birkenhead—Cross Purposes in Party Politics—Sir James Picton and the Liverpool Conservative Party—The *Sultana*—A Stormy Irish Channel Passage—A Tidal Service between Liverpool and Rhyl—R. W. Preston—Rioting in Birkenhead—Valiant Magistrates—Sir Edward Cust—The Leasowe Castle Bloodhound—Volunteering in Wirral—Colonel King—Brown, Shipley, & Co.—The Author and Charles Hamilton.

AFTER the lamented death of John Laird, I was cordially invited by a number of prominent Conservatives to allow myself to be nominated as Conservative candidate for Birkenhead. I gave a provisional consent; and the matter was formally brought before the Birkenhead Conservative Association; of which I was a member. However, it was not long before we were all at cross purposes. An influential section, thinking that such a member would influence trade for the Birkenhead docks, and also the building of steamships in the borough, desired to

secure the services of a shipowner. William Inman, of Upton Manor, a strong Conservative, and a man of no ordinary ability, was approached ; but he was disqualified ; and had to decline ; owing to his having a contract with the post office for carrying the mails in the Transatlantic trade. Advances were then made to David MacIver, a man of property and an owner of steamers ; further, he had vessels in course of building at the Birkenhead Iron Works. David MacIver consented to stand ; and I was asked to give way. At first, I positively declined ; as my address to the electors was ready for the press ; and many influential men in the town urged me to come forward ; and on no account to change my mind. Indeed, they assured me I should be placed at the head of the poll by a large majority ; of which I had little doubt ; as my business and position ensured me the votes of the leading tradesmen and householders in the borough. Subsequently, a deputation from the Conservative Association waited upon me ; and stated they were pledged to bring David MacIver forward and to support him ; and that they could not, in honour, withdraw his name. They added, what was very true,

that a Liberal candidate was ready; and would be brought to the poll; that the Conservative vote would be split; and that, in all probability, our party would lose the seat. This was a serious matter to consider. I turned it over in my mind; and consulted some of my most intimate Conservative friends. I was still undecided; when some friends who belonged to the Liberal party called upon me; congratulated me on my determination to go to the poll; and stated there was little doubt that my candidature would prove successful. Such disingenuousness brought me to a prompt decision; and I withdrew in Mr. MacIver's favour, without any compensation whatever. As a matter of fact, I infinitely preferred to sacrifice my own feelings, rather than run the risk of throwing the seat away owing to a party wrangle.

A leading Liverpool man in his day was Sir James Picton; a prominent figure both in municipal and in political affairs. He was a man of great ability and indomitable energy. The beautiful Reference Library in Shaw's Brow is a fitting monument of a worthy and a munificent citizen. Sir James Picton was, without doubt,

justly entitled to the position of Chief Magistrate ; but his politics were opposed to the strong Conservative party predominant at the Liverpool Town Hall. It is, and will ever be, a standing disgrace to that party ; in that they allowed politics to obscure the undoubted claims and virtues of a great and noble citizen ; and permitted Sir James Picton to pass away without raising him to the civic chair. Sir James had numerous friends and admirers. I had the pleasure of knowing him well ; and I always found him a kindly and a most unostentatious man. He was, unquestionably, one of Liverpool's best.

One of my brothers was out in the Crimea during the Russian War. I worked for him on this side. He sent home an order for a small screw-steamer as tug and tender for the Turkish Government. I inquired from the Bridgwater Trustees if they would sell a little steamer, called the *Weaver* ; which worked on their canal. She was built by John Laird ; and I happened to know something about her size and speed ; and considered her very suitable. The Trustees sold her to me at a fair and reasonable price ; and I rechristened her the

Sultana. She was rather small to go such a voyage ; but John Laird said he could rig and fit her so that she might with safety accomplish the task. However, two days after the *Sultana* left the Mersey, I received a telegram from the captain that he had put into Cork ; as the vessel's bilge-pumps were choked and would not work. This was in the month of January ; and very stormy weather. I wired to Cork that I would be there on the following day. My wife said she would like to go with me ; and I also took my friend, Maxwell Scott ; who had been with me at Fawcett & Preston's. We arrived at Holyhead at two o'clock in the morning. It was then blowing a heavy gale. My wife, undaunted by the elements, asked Captain Hirst, superintendent of the steamers, whether it was safe to cross the channel in such a gale. He said : " Well, Mrs. Aspinall, if you ask me whether you will have a pleasant voyage across, my reply is, ' No ; ' but I have no doubt that the *Anglia* will arrive safely at Kingstown." As soon as we left the quay, the bulwarks forward were removed ; and iron rods, specially provided for the purpose, put in their stead ; which allowed

the seas to sweep clean over the deck, and to quickly pass away. Outside the harbour, we had to face one of the worst and the biggest seas ever encountered in a channel passage between Holyhead and Ireland. The *Anglia*, recently built, and engined with Mawdsley's four cylinder engines, known as quadruple, made the passage rather through than over the waves ; and arrived in Kingstown harbour in six hours. After resting at a Dublin hotel for two or three hours, we took train to Cork ; where we found the captain of the *Sultana* awaiting us. Mr. Pike, an intimate friend of my wife's father, was then chief owner of the Cork Steamship Company ; and had a shipbuilding and an engineering yard ; so I put the *Sultana* in his hands. He did all the necessary repairs ; fitted in strong bilge pieces ; filled the *Sultana* up with coal, sufficient to carry her to Gibraltar ; and we returned to Liverpool. The *Sultana*, after a quick run, arrived right and tight ; recoaled for Malta ; all right ; coaled again ; and finally arrived at Constantinople after a rapid passage. She was sold immediately to the Turkish Government at a very big price. The *Sultana* was a grand, little boat ; of con-

siderable speed ; and did her work well for many years as a tug-boat on the Bosphorus.

Before the Chester and Holyhead railway was built, there was a tidal service of steamers between Liverpool and Rhyl ; which developed a considerable traffic in passengers and merchandise. There was then a large warehouse and a wharf at Rhuddlan. An old hunting friend of mine, R. W. Preston, was largely interested in the Rhyl steam-service ; and Captain Lewis Lewis, now captain of the *St. Tudno*, was one of his captains ; and a very good navigator he is. However, there will never be a profitable service between Liverpool and Rhyl until a deep water pier is built on the Welsh coast to enable boats to land at any state of the tide. Mr. Preston is well known in Cheshire ; and now resides in Wallasey ; much esteemed ; not only for his genial manner, but for his warm hospitality. His two sons hunt in Cheshire ; and are noted for being well up with the hounds.

In the early 'fifties, religious feeling ran rather high among the more noisy section of the community in Birkenhead. Finally, it led to a small outbreak of rioting. One day, the Town

Hall (not, by the way, a very elegant structure) was attacked by a mob, when the magistrates were sitting on the bench. Sir Edward Cust, of Leasowe Castle, was chairman of the justices. Mainly by the efforts of the police authorities, ably seconded by Mr. Bretherton, solicitor, the rioters were dispersed. Meanwhile, however, it was reported, most of the magistrates had arisen rapidly from the bench ; and sought refuge in the prisoners' cells below the Town Hall. The public mind was in a very excited state for some days ; so many of the residents were sworn in as special constables ; I amongst the number. I still have in my possession the constable's staff handed to me at the time. A few days after the attack upon the Town Hall, a parcel, addressed to the Right Honourable Sir Edward Cust, Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates, was handed up whilst the magistrates were sitting on the bench. On the parcel's being opened, a crinoline and a white feather were found. The right honourable gentleman was naturally greatly incensed ; and remarked that it was an insult ; not only to himself, but to every member of the bench. He added, that he had every reason to

believe that the parcel emanated from the heads of the Birkenhead police. I was then a member of the Watch Committee; and I corresponded with Sir Edward Cust on the subject at some length.

For some years, Sir Edward Cust had a diplomatic position on the Continent. During his absence, Leasowe Castle was left in charge of a housekeeper and a maid. The gardener and his assistant lived in a cottage near the stables. One dark winter's night, there was a great knocking at the Castle entrance gates. The housekeeper asked who was there; and was told that a large box had been brought in a cart from Birkenhead, addressed to Sir Edward Cust. The gardener was sent for; the gates were opened; and two men carried the box into the hall. Sir Edward Cust had a very beautiful bloodhound; which, after a long life, was stuffed; and placed in the hall. This bloodhound now stood guard over the box. The two men went away with the cart; the gardener and his assistant returned to the cottage; but the dog could not be persuaded to leave the box. He walked around it; and simply growled. The

women became much alarmed ; and sent for the gardener again. The dog persisted in his growls ; so suspicion as to the contents of the box was aroused ; and it was determined to burst it open and see what was inside. This was done ; when out came a burglar fully armed. With the help of the dog, the man was 'secured ; and afterwards taken to the Bridewell ; but the two men who brought the box were never heard of again.

The proposal to form a volunteer corps in Birkenhead was very popular. Colonel King, Colonel Cunningham, and Major Hornblower were indefatigable. Colonel King was the leader of the movement in Wirral. Soon after it was inaugurated, I was invited to dine with the volunteers at Hooton ; where they were encamped. We had an excellent dinner ; soup, fish, joints ; all one could wish ; but I remember one knife and fork and one plate had to serve for all the courses. I sat on the dear, old Colonel's right ; and, when the second course appeared, he noticed me pause. "What are you waiting for, Aspinall?" he said, "you will get only one knife and fork and one plate here ; and, if you

are not satisfied, you'll have to do without your dinner. With us, you have to take things as they come." The Colonel's dear, good, charitable daughter, who resides in her father's house, "Point of Ayr," Oxton, is beloved by all who have the privilege of her acquaintance. Long may she yet live amongst us !

Brown, Shipley, & Co., of Liverpool, are well-known American Merchants and Bankers. Sir William Brown, the head of the firm, was the donor of the William Brown Museum and Library ; within the walls of which thousands have derived both pleasure and profit. One of my personal friends, Charles Hamilton, was a leading member of Brown, Shipley, & Co. We knew each other on the flags in Liverpool ; and on the hunting-field in Cheshire. I happened to be in the Royal Exchange Insurance Co.'s office in London only a few years ago having a talk with the secretary, Mr. Hancock, when a gentleman walked past me. I looked up ; and recognised Charles Hamilton ; very little changed ; although his hair was turning grey. I called out : "Isn't that Charles Hamilton?" He turned round ; and almost embraced me. "Well, Aspinal," he

said, "I had no idea you were sitting in that chair when I passed." Shaking hands in his usual genial way, he expressed his great pleasure at seeing me ; and then remarked, "A few weeks ago, I went to Liverpool on business ; walked on to the flags ; and into the Exchange Newsroom ; but I assure you I didn't see a face I knew. I remained in Liverpool only three days ; and was thankful to get away ; as I felt really sad when I thought that I, who only a few years ago knew nearly every face on the flags, now appeared to be the last, must I say, of my day and generation." Our conversation was short ; but, I think, very pathetic.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Liverpool Mayors' Unconscious Humour—A Disconcerted Guest—The Flabbergasted Tailor—The Ewarts—The Whitleys—"Britannia"—"One of Each"—Modern Refreshment Rooms—Sir Richard Puleston—The Cases—The Theatre Royal—Edward Rushton and the Hebrew.

LIVERPOOL has long been famed for its hospitality ; both public and private.

Ludicrous tales are told of some of our chief magistrates ; excellent citizens ; but no public speakers.

His Worship on one occasion was a man of great wealth. He was presiding at a Town Hall banquet when, as usual, the health of the Mayor was proposed. Our worthy friend responded in the following terms : " Gentlemen, I thank you from my heart for the kind manner in which you have toasted my health. Gentlemen, I was born in the good old town ; and I can look back upon my *posteriors* with pride " (roars of laughter, and cheers). " Yes, gentlemen ;

I feel proud in looking back upon my *posteriors* as an old Liverpool family." (Roars of laughter.) Happily, his Worship saw no distinction between applause and merriment.

At a later date, the then Mayor proposed the health of a young man ; who had just been made a partner with his father ; a wealthy and popular merchant in the town. "Gentlemen, I ask you to drink to the health of my young friend, Mr. — ; who sits on my right. He is just commencing his business life as a partner in the well-known merchant house of which his respected father is the head. Gentlemen, I sincerely hope that our young friend will tread in the footsteps of his honoured father ; and be *more virtuous* than his esteemed mother." Cheers and roars of laughter ; amid which his Worship resumed his seat in happy ignorance of his diverting blunder.

Recently, rather an amusing circumstance occurred at a luncheon at the Liverpool Town Hall. The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor for the time being presided. A notable stranger had risen to his legs a little before one o'clock ; and was returning thanks to the toast of his health ; when all at once every man in the

room pulled out his watch; and looked at it. The guest changed colour; hastily wound up his speech; and sat down looking rather confused. Of course, the explanation was simple enough. *The one o'clock gun had just gone!*

In the early 'forties, when cheap tailoring was first extensively advertised in Liverpool, Benjamin Hyam opened a shop in the business part of the town. Shortly afterwards, a prominent advertisement appeared in the local press: "Gentlemen's Evening Suits, finest quality, West of England Black Cloth." The price was ridiculously low. Three well-known men, Tom Tobin, Todd Naylor, and James Aspinall, might frequently be seen at the Athenæum. On the opposite side of the street was a chemist; celebrated for dispensing a mixture known as a "Pick-me-up." The three friends were of a convivial nature; and frequently called upon the chemist to make good the indiscretions of the previous night. One morning, they were seated in the Athenæum; when one of them spied the tailor's glowing advertisement. Immediately, they made up their minds to have a joke at Hyam's expense.

James Aspinall weighed twenty-seven stone ; and stood six feet two inches high. Todd Naylor very nearly reached the same bulk ; while Tom Tobin made but a slight difference on the scales. Agreeably to their plot, James Aspinall walked into Mr. Hyam's shop ; and said he had come to order a suit of clothes, as advertised ; and that he would like to be measured right away. The tailor picked up his tape and carefully took the dimensions ; which were most unusual ; not to say prodigious. After some little hesitation, Mr. Hyam meekly suggested that he would like to charge a little extra over and above the advertised price ; which had been fixed very low ; and was intended to meet the wants of men of average build. On this, James Aspinall insisted that he was entitled to be supplied at the price advertised ; but said that in the event of the clothes proving satisfactory he would certainly recommend his friends. A week or two after, Tom Tobin presented himself ; and pretty much the same kind of interview took place. Again Mr. Hyam tried for a little extra to meet the demands made on his material by such extraordinary customers.

However, Tom Tobin was obdurate ; he would recommend his friends ; but insisted on being supplied at the figure advertised. The poor tailor thought it most unlikely that there could be any more such men about ; so he executed the order. When, a few days after, Todd Naylor presented himself ; and said he had been recommended by Mr. Aspinall and Mr. Tobin to buy a suit of clothes, as advertised, Hyam was utterly flabbergasted. He was a man of diminutive stature ; and, looking up at Todd Naylor, he said he would supply him with a suit of clothes ; but solemnly protested he could execute no further orders for any of the friends ; or he would undoubtedly be ruined.

One of the most prominent Liverpool men in his day was William Ewart, Whig member for Liverpool ; who fought some hard political battles ; his contest with Sandon, in particular. William Ewart was a man of much commercial and political experience. The great William Ewart Gladstone was named after him. The Ewarts were leading men in Liverpool. Joseph Ewart resided for some years at New Brighton ; and was Chairman of the Electric Telegraph Com-

pany. He had a charming manner ; and was greatly respected. When the Electric Telegraph Company was sold to the Government, every £100 share realised £200.

Among the finest citizens Liverpool ever produced was Edward Whitley ; kind-hearted and genial ; a really good man ; much appreciated and beloved. Everyone knew Edward Whitley. He filled the civic chair ; and was M.P. for Liverpool. For some years, he was busily engaged with churches and schools ; and in other philanthropic efforts. I knew him and his family intimately. His father, John Whitley, an eminent Liverpool solicitor, and his mother, a sister of Sir Gilbert Greenall's, of Warrington, were charming people. The family resided in Liverpool ; but, for many years, in the summer, took a furnished house at West Kirby ; where there was a small, but happy community. West Kirby, in those days, was a tiny village. My family used to spend five or six months each year at West Kirby. The Whitley children were all nice boys and girls. Edward, the eldest son, on attaining manhood, not only devoted himself to philanthropic and religious work in Liverpool ; but he also did

what he could at West Kirby ; and every year had parties from the Sunday schools,—children, teachers, and others,—brought to West Kirby by 'busses for week-ends. Sir Gilbert Greenall was very fond of the young Whitleys ; and took two of the boys into the great brewery at Wilderspool ; which was Sir Gilbert's property. John and Peter Whitley worked hard in extending the trade of the brewery ; and took a warm interest in it. They died greatly regretted, I may say, almost in middle age. Edward, who was the head of a firm of leading Liverpool solicitors, then joined the brewery at Wilderspool ; but he died before he was an old man, leaving a wife and children. He married late in life an estimable Liverpool lady ; who now survives him. We used to chaff him at his remaining so many years a bachelor ; and seldom saw him without asking the question whether he had found a wife. He took a severe cold in very inclement weather. I believe his children presented him with a fur-lined coat ; in order that he might travel comfortably from his residence at Rhyl, a place he much liked, to Liverpool. He took the coat off in his office ; and put on



MRS. TAYLOR (GEORGE'S LANDING-STAGE).—Page 279.

a light one ; as he had an engagement to take his seat on the bench at the Police Court. The Court was cold ; he felt chilly ; went back home ; was taken ill ; and died, after a very short illness, of pneumonia. His loss was greatly deplored. We have had many great and good men in Liverpool ; but few of such prominence as an exceptionally high-minded citizen.

The George's landing-stage bookstall was opened many years ago by a dear old lady, Mrs. Taylor, commonly called “Britannia” ; of whom she was considered typical. Her portrait appears on the opposite page. Mrs. Taylor died a few years ago ; and left her son, Edwin, the business. Edwin Taylor has always a cheery and a respectful word for his customers. I have heard him speak of a famous old eating-house on Mann Island ; kept by a Mrs. White ; who was noted for the tasty and wholesome cookeries she provided. These chiefly consisted of delicate morsels ; carefully packed in little square tins ; which just held sufficient for one meal. Mrs. White was well patronised by old and young. The favourite order was “One of each.” This meant a slice of bacon and a nice

slice of toasted cheese, with two carefully cut pieces of bread or toast; all as clean and appetising as the most delicate palate could wish. Mrs. White supplied a quite unique smoking hot sandwich at a most reasonable price.

Only in recent years have we experienced the comfort of obtaining light luncheons and other refreshments,—tea, coffee, cocoa, and sandwiches, on economical terms. In my younger days, one had to go to an hotel and pay exorbitant prices for what may now be had for a few pence. At the present time, there are numerous cafés and restaurants; some worthy of the name of shop-palaces. The public much appreciate the comfort and accommodation provided on such reasonable terms.

Sir Richard Puleston used to be very fond of summer cruising in the river Mersey; and along the Welsh coast. He resided in a very pretty villa on the site of the present Woodside Lairages. During the summer, his yacht was anchored opposite his house, near the existing pontoon bridge for goods traffic. There was deep water; and vessels lay there in shelter and safety.

The house was eventually sold to and occupied

by John Dean Case, treasurer to the Liverpool Corporation ; chairman of the Birkenhead bench of magistrates ; and a most respected townsman. John Dean Case was a widower ; and had a large square pew next to my father's in St. Mary's Church. His eldest son, George, was very fond of jewellery ; of which he always wore a large quantity. Accordingly, we nicknamed him "Jewel-case." His other son, Bolton, who died a few years ago, was very short-sighted ; and wore spectacles. Him we called "Spectacle-case."

Years ago, I was asked by some of my Birkenhead friends to join a company formed for building a theatre. A few thousand pounds were subscribed. Among my colleagues were George Harrison, Robert Dean, Halsall Segar, and Lewis Hornblower. Built in Argyle Street, the theatre was called the Royal. It was a wretched speculation ; and we all lost our money. The property was eventually sold to a Mr. Gaskell. G. H. Fletcher asked me one day if I would sell my shares. My reply was, "Yes." "Well ;" he said, "what will you take for them ?" I said "10s. in the £1." They were £1 shares ; and I had 1700. Mr. Fletcher closed at the

price named ; and gave me a cheque for £850. I don't believe he ever got a penny back. However, he was a man of great wealth ; and the theatre has been a source of considerable pleasure and amusement to Birkenhead people. It is now managed by a gentleman of great experience ; and I only hope he may meet with that success which his enterprise so thoroughly deserves.

Edward Rushton, a man of most original character, was Stipendiary Magistrate for many years in Liverpool. He was highly appreciated ; and was considered a representative type of the straightforward English gentleman. Indeed, he always fearlessly, though perhaps not always politely, expressed his frank and honest opinions when sitting in his judicial capacity on the bench. On one occasion, a respectable Hebrew shop-keeper, whose business was in St. George's Crescent, appeared in the witness box on a rather important prosecution which took place in Edward Rushton's court. After some questions and remarks by the solicitors who appeared in the case, Mr. Rushton became rather impatient ; and asked the witness why he did not express

himself in more precise and straightforward terms. The Hebrew assured the magistrate that he was not at all in good health ; and was very nervous ; as he could not sleep at night ; which had a disturbing effect upon his constitution. " In fact, your worship," he said, " my heart goes, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pit ; and disturbs me dreadfully." " Oh," said Edward Rushton, losing his temper, "*it is your damned evil conscience that will not let you sleep.*"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Financial Disasters—Local Banks—Financial Crisis of 1847—
Consideration for Honourable Debtors — The Moseleys—
Charles Moseley—Banquet at the Philharmonic Hall—
High Sheriff's Banquet—George Francis Train—Birken-
head as a Pioneer Town—The First Tramway in Europe—
The Electric Cars—Electricity the Motive Power of the
Future—Starbuck & Co.—G. F. Milnes—Littledale's Bridge
—The Old Inn and Slave-Mart—Horrors of the Slave-Trade—
The *Alabama*—The *Deerhound*—Veracity of Liverpool Ship-
brokers—A Quiet Deal in Corn.

FINANCIAL disasters have been frequent in the Liverpool and the Birkenhead districts during the last sixty years. Nearly all our Birkenhead land speculators came to grief in the late 'forties. Small deposits only were paid on the first dealings; and in many instances the balance of the purchase money was never paid; so the property reverted back to the original owners. Failures occurred on every side. Jerry-builders and sub-contractors, after grabbing all they could, disappeared in a night;

and were never heard of again. Shopkeepers and other tradesmen were nearly ruined by bad debts. The only Bank we had in the town, the North and South Wales Branch, together with the Liverpool Head Office, closed its doors for several weeks ; and the shares fell to panic price. However, the capital was reduced by making ten pound shares into seven pound ten shillings ; and shortly afterwards the Bank reopened ; but large numbers of tradesmen felt the shock ; as also did families having small bank accounts.

In Liverpool, 1847 will never be forgotten. Not only did the North and South Wales Bank fail ; but the Royal Bank of Liverpool, in Dale Street, closed its doors for several weeks. Five firms got on overdrafts a total of over one million sterling ; and the securities lodged with the Bank were quite inconvertible at the time cash was urgently required. One firm of shipowners and merchants, at the time, about the biggest and most respected firm in Liverpool, owed the Bank £525,000. This firm's property, consisting of ships, cotton, sugar, shares, etc., was realised with all possible haste. Valuable assets were sacrificed ; yet this firm, ruined by

bankruptcy proceedings, has since paid something like twenty shillings in the pound after the lapse of a lifetime. If consideration and patience were only extended towards honourable debtors, much money might be saved ; sorrow and heartburnings avoided ; many honest firms and individuals preserved from ruin ! Strange to relate, although the Royal Bank was resuscitated, and started once more under good auspices for future prosperity, within twenty years, almost to the day, namely, 1867, the Bank doors were closed, never to reopen. The Borough Bank, considered to be the leading bank in Liverpool, closed its doors for ever in 1857 ; and, subsequently, BARNED'S Bank, in Lord Street, which had some little time previously been made into a Limited Co., also came to grief. This disaster caused great inconvenience to the tradesmen of Liverpool ; as the Moseleys (the founders and the largest shareholders in the bank) were perhaps the most popular bankers in Liverpool. They always accommodated their customers to the fullest extent. Charles Moseley, when Mayor of Liverpool, entertained in a princely style. His liberality was unbounded. As a banker, the

warm interest he took in his customers' welfare was untainted by paltry and suspicious conduct. Charles Moseley was perhaps the best banking friend the tradespeople of Liverpool ever had. He was a man of great power in his day. I knew him well ; and once had a big transaction with him during the Crimean War. In fact, the business included a large amount of Government paper ; and terminated in a most profitable and satisfactory manner. If Charles Moseley said "No," he meant it ; but he always carried out his promises to the fullest possible extent.

During the time of his Mayoralty, the Channel Fleet, composed of the largest number of men-of-war that had ever entered the port, under the command of Admiral Sir Sidney D'Acres, visited Liverpool. I was asked to join a committee formed in Liverpool to raise funds for entertainments ; not only to the Admiral and his officers ; but also to the crews. A considerable sum of money was subscribed. The men were entertained at St. George's Hall ; the Admiral and the officers at the Philharmonic Hall ; where the entertainment was simply superb. Tables were loaded with solid silver and electro

silver. Elkington, Jones, Wordley, Mayor, and other leading silversmiths contributed. In fact, the tables were a mass of silver and flowers; and the general effect was indescribable. The choicest wines and the daintiest food in their own way equalled the service. I have a vivid recollection of the whole affair. The hall was brilliantly lighted; the galleries were filled with well-dressed ladies; and the tables were occupied by some of the best men in the country.

When Sir A. B. Walker was High Sheriff for the County of Lancaster, he gave one of the most magnificent banquets ever seen in Liverpool. I was one of the guests; and sat at table with Edward Whitley. It was one of the finest functions at which I was ever present; and few have seen more grand displays of the kind than I.

Tramways are a remarkable development of vehicular traffic. To George Francis Train, a clever, persevering American, belongs all the glory of the initiator. Snubbed on all sides, G. F. Train finally came to the poor little "City of the Future"; where, in spite of the abuse freely bestowed upon that benighted place,

the man of ideas was listened to ; facilities were afforded ; and the first tram-cars in Europe began to ply between Woodside Ferry and Birkenhead Park. Other cities quickly followed the lead of despised Birkenhead ; and the tram system has developed until we now possess in the electric cars a safe, an economical, and a most delightful means of conveyance. I congratulate the Corporations of Liverpool and of Birkenhead on adopting and working for the public good so comprehensive a system of street travelling.

There was no railway in the States when I was there in 1840 ; but a few primitive tramway lines were laid down : one from Louistown to Niagara, I think about eight or nine miles long. I rode on that line ; and was seated rather comfortably in a sort of old-fashioned waggon. Who could have predicted that the motive power of all modern tramway systems would be nothing more or less than lightning ? I venture to assert that we are near the time when railways for any distance will be run by means of electricity ; and that steamers will pass from one end of the world to the other driven by the same marvellous power.

Starbuck & Co. established tramway carriage works in Birkenhead; and were very successful for some years. The works were subsequently taken over by a limited company; and the business was conducted under the able management of G. F. Milnes. Starbuck & Co. have always been noted for the thoroughness of their work. Hence their cars may be seen in all parts of the world wherever a tramway is laid. Unfortunately for Birkenhead, G. F. Milnes removed the works to Hadley, Shropshire; as land and labour are there very much cheaper.

Many will remember an ugly structure, near the bottom of Water Street, called Littledale's Bridge. It was built at the instigation of Harold Littledale, a leading member of the Dock Board, to accommodate people who passed to and from the river. However, when the cart-road passing St. Nicholas' Church was widened, the authorities wisely determined to take a portion off the churchyard; and to sweep away the bridge; as it really did not serve any useful purpose.

About this time, a small inn standing near the churchyard was pulled down. This old public-house was at one time to all intents and

purposes a slave-mart. Before the abolition of slavery, some hundreds of merchants resided in or about Liverpool; who carried on a large trade in buying and selling slaves. There is no necessity for me to describe this diabolical business; but I can say, with truth, that the horrors endured during the voyages of the small vessels engaged in the traffic are beyond conception. It used to be said that if a cargo of negroes, packed away almost like herrings in a barrel, left the coast of Africa for the West Indies, the result of the voyage was highly satisfactory, if *one-third* of the unhappy wretches survived to reach the port of destination. However, humanity finally prevailed over the desire to make money at any cost; and this unholy traffic in flesh and blood is now rarely to be met with in any part of the civilised world.

There was much excitement in Liverpool in the early 'sixties. The great American Civil War was raging. North was fighting against South; brother against brother! One day, it was rumoured that a vessel had been built in Birkenhead for privateering work on behalf of the Confederate States. She had been ordered and

paid for by a Liverpool firm closely connected in business with the Southerners. The famous screw-steamer, *Alabama*, left Liverpool one night very quietly; and was met in the Channel by another steamer; from which large quantities of ammunition, guns, and other warlike stores were transhipped. Little more it is needless to write; for the doings of the *Alabama* are historical. After a successful privateering career, she was eventually sunk in an engagement with the Federal States warship, *Kearsarge*, off Cherbourg. The Commander, Captain Semmes, and his crew were all saved by a Lancashire gentleman; who was in his yacht, the *Deerhound*, near at hand. She was a fast yacht; and the man-of-war saw it was no use trying to catch her. The yacht reached our shores in safety. Two rams were built to follow the lost *Alabama*; but these were detained in the Mersey by the British Government; who subsequently purchased them from the builders for our own Navy.

Formerly, Liverpool shipbrokers were frequently called to account for their utter disregard of veracity. They got this reputation; not so much because they wished to tell deliberate lies; but

largely because it was impossible for them to give a definite reply to such questions as : " When will the ship load ? " " When will the ship sail ? " " What day do you expect such a vessel to arrive ? " and similar inquiries. The position of affairs is entirely altered now that steamers arrive and depart on certain fixed days, at definite hours. A notorious firm of shipbrokers was B. & B. One of the old Mr. B.'s was once taxed for being so utterly devoid of truthfulness. His reply is instructive : " My friend, when I say ' upon my honour as a gentleman ' I mean the truth ; but when I give my opinion as a shipbroker, more often than not it is a damned lie ! "

The Friends or Quakers do not now appear to be so numerous as formerly. Indeed, the really strict Quaker, so far, at all events, as outward garb is concerned, is never seen except on Quakers' Oats. The Friends, however, were always highly esteemed ; and are so to this day. A story is told of two worthy Friends connected with the Corn Exchange. Quakers are commonly very grave, quiet, thoughtful people, usually well-to-do in the world. They will sometimes sit in their meeting-house for

hours together, without a word being spoken, or anything outwardly devotional being done. Cynics allege that this manner of bringing up gives the Friends ample time to consider matters worldly as well as spiritual during the hours of worship. A silent sitting had continued for about an hour, when one Friend addressed the other : "William, what is the lowest price that thou wilt take for that cargo of wheat in such a vessel from such and such a port?" William replied : "James, I'll tell thee in a few minutes when I have considered it." A few minutes elapsed. William said : "James, if thou wilt make me a firm offer at such and such a price, thou shalt have the cargo." "I'll take it," said James ; and the bargain was struck.

CHAPTER XXV.

Sir W. M. Stanley, Bart., as High Sheriff—A Hunting Procession—The Author as Grand Juror—A Brewer's Disability—The Brewing Trade—The Drunkard—Teetotal Nostrums—The Brewer as a Citizen—Sir A. B. Walker, Bart.—Afternoon Drinks—The Birkenhead Press—The Liverpool Press—Mr. Sherlock's Tragic End—J. R. Jeffrey—The Burning of Compton House—Dick Tipton—Stephen Guion.

IN the early 'forties, Sir William Massey Stanley, Bart., was appointed High Sheriff for the county of Chester. The gentlemen who followed the Hooton hounds, and also many of those who hunted with the Cheshire, determined to give him a hearty welcome in his new capacity. A procession was arranged to escort him from Hooton Hall to Chester. All who joined in it appeared in full hunting costume, scarlet coats and white breeches; and mounted on their hunters. It was a quite unique spectacle; and attracted crowds of people. The equipage that the High Sheriff rode in was turned out in as fine a

style as could be imagined. Four thoroughbred chestnut horses drew his carriage ; and the scene as the procession entered Chester, with flags flying and bands playing, was most exhilarating.

When John Ralph Shaw was High Sheriff for the county of Chester, he placed me on the Grand Jury ; a permanent appointment, mostly made only in the case of County Justices.

At this time, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, then the Marquis of Westminster, took steps to ascertain the opinion of the Wirral Justices as to my having a seat on the County Bench : but objection was taken to my appointment on the ground that I was a brewer. In thanking the Lord-Lieutenant, I drew his attention to the statutory clause prohibiting brewers from sitting on the bench during Licensing Sessions ; but I did not press the point. However, since brewers are prohibited as interested parties, surely common fairness would suggest that rabid opponents of the Trade should be excluded on the same principle ? Interesting to note, there is not now a single survivor of the County Bench as it was in the 'fifties.

I sometimes wonder if all Justices in those

days were total abstainers. Few, I am sure, took the advice of my old friend, Colonel King ; who urged would-be reformers not to stop at closing the working-man's hotel on Sundays ; but to hand over, each week-end to the Head Constable, the keys of their wine-cellar and side-boards from Saturday night until Monday morning.

A section of the community, aptly described by Bobby Burns as the "unco guid," would legislate in a Sabbatarian spirit ; not only against the Trade ; but, as expressed in the old doggerel, would even enact that

"The cat mustn't kitten on a Sunday ;
She must put it off 'till Monday."

The brewing trade is harassed more and more as the years roll by. Strange it is in these democratic days, when so much stress is laid on the necessity of legislating in the interests of the people as a whole, to find mistaken reformers, men who would fain rank as the salt of their day and generation, clamouring for legislation in favour of a class, and that class the smallest in the community, the drunkard ! Nor must the total abstainer arrogate to himself sole con-

cern for the cause of temperance. It is safe to say that the drunkard does as much harm to the Trade as does the fanatical teetotaler to the cause of true temperance. Even admitting for the sake of argument, that the taking of alcoholic drinks as a beverage is a vicious habit, it is folly to try and coerce men into being total abstainers; while to expect to keep them sober by Act of Parliament is about as reasonable as to hope by such means to make all men six feet high. Here, as elsewhere, quackery is futile. *Excess in any form is the outcome of the habits of a life; and there is no panacea.* Excessive drinking as an evil is an effect rather than a cause. As its growth, so must its cure be gradual. Improved sanitary, economic, and social conditions, coupled with the vastly increased diffusion of knowledge, which has widened the mental outlook, and multiplied indefinitely the rational interests in life: these influences, naturally making for refinement and raising the standard of conduct, these have been the chief factors in the growth of temperance during the last half century; and it is to the still further extension of such influences, rather than to the empirical

nostrums of muddy thinkers, that one can look with confidence for the spread of the *principle of moderation*; which is the silken cord, at once as regards drink and the whole conduct of life.

As a rule, the brewer is a highly respectable citizen; and one of the most liberal-minded business men to be met with. In philanthropic undertakings, he is always well to the front; while in private life he is usually a most hospitable and a large-hearted man. From among the many honoured names of local brewers, I select one typical representative. Sir A. B. Walker, Bart., was a remarkably clever business man; and a kind-hearted gentleman. He amassed a considerable fortune; and, whatever may be said as to his being the owner of so many public-houses, it is certain that his private life was irreproachable. I knew him intimately. The Walker Art Gallery is a fitting monument to his memory; and is a source of infinite pleasure and profit to many thousands.

Fifty or sixty years ago, the consumption of whisky was but small. Indeed, one seldom heard it asked for except on the other side of the Channel and in Scotland. Afternoon callers

now find the tea-table set. It used to be a large tray of glasses ; cold water, brandy, gin, port, and sherry. As to which is the more wholesome beverage opinion conflicts. Some doctors maintain that what is commonly known as strong drink did less harm than does the present tea-drinking fashion. However, it resolves itself into the simple question of *moderation*. A reasonable quantity of any of the beverages never did anybody any harm.

Owing to our close contact with Liverpool, Birkenhead for many years lacked a press of her own. The want was supplied, I believe, some time in the 'forties ; and newspapers, weekly and bi-weekly, have for many years met with a measure of success. Overshadowed by Liverpool, our publications are but parochial in character ; though one is happy to state that on the limited subjects of which they treat a tone is maintained worthy of the traditions of the British press.

Liverpool has long been noted for the high standard of its newspapers. The *Albion*, the *Liverpool Courier*, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the *Liverpool Journal*, the *Liverpool Mercury*, and

the *Mail*: these have been piloted on a straightforward tack by well-known men ; most of whom I had the pleasure of knowing personally : Alexander, Bean, Harbourn, Russell, Sherlock, Egerton Smith, Whitty, Willox, and many others. During my public life, I was brought into intimate touch with members of the press ; some of whom were friends and neighbours.

One of the most popular Conservative newspapers ever published in Liverpool was the *Mail*. The proprietor was Mr. Sherlock ; the editor, Mr. Alexander. This weekly newspaper prospered for some years ; and was very popular with the extreme Conservative party. I well remember the clever articles written by Mr. Alexander ; whose popularity, I fear, was mainly due to the abusive tone which pervaded every column. Mr. Sherlock's end was most tragic. He was travelling in the North of England ; and, while waiting at a railway station for a train, a heavy thunderstorm broke ; and he was struck by a flash of lightning and killed. The news came as a great shock to his family and his many admirers. After this, the *Mail* soon ceased to exist. It was much missed in the district.

J. R. Jeffrey, of Jeffrey, Morrish, & Co., was a notable man; both politically and socially. He lived in the suburbs of Liverpool; and opened an establishment in Church Street of a quite unique character in its time. He also had a large interest in the *Liverpool Daily Post* when J. Whitty was chief.

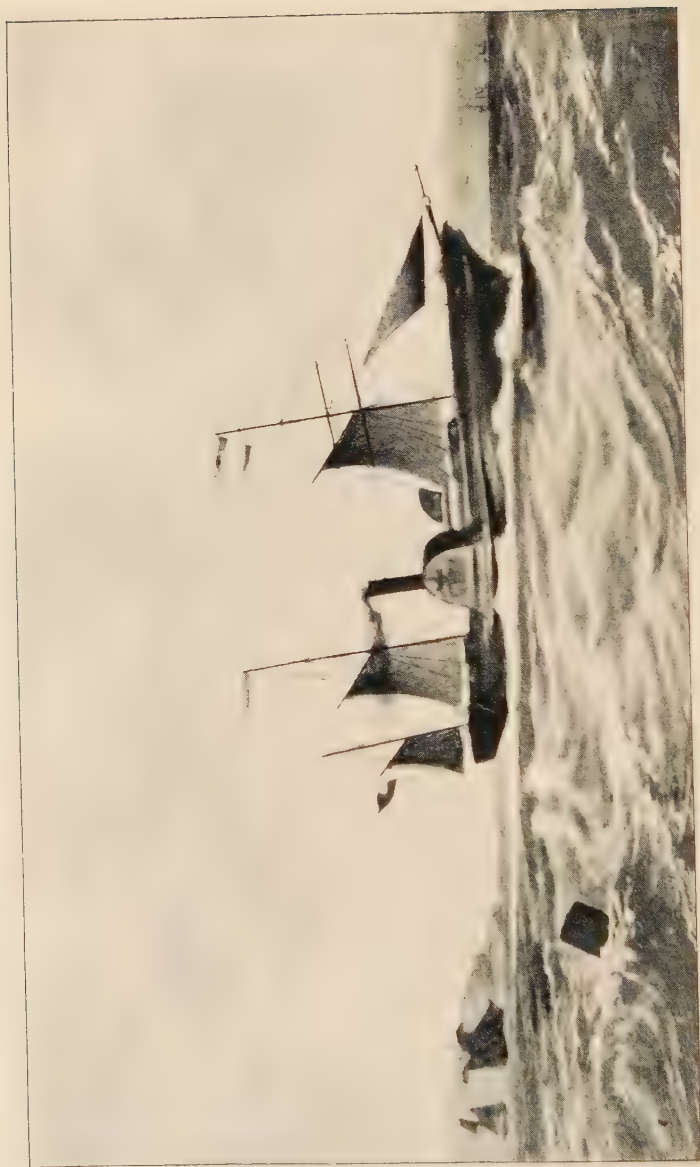
One of the biggest fires which ever occurred in Liverpool was the burning of Compton House; at that time a combination of small shops. The fire lasted only a short time; but it resulted in the entire destruction of the property. The disaster caused a sensation in Liverpool; and had a very serious effect upon J. R. Jeffrey. Indeed, the public felt much sympathy for him. He was a man of undaunted spirit; and, instead of sitting down and mourning over his losses, he set to work and built perhaps one of the finest structures of its kind in Liverpool. Compton House is now well known under the ownership of Watts & Sons. The building cost a large sum of money; but J. R. Jeffrey's hard work and great anxiety seriously affected his health; and brought about his premature death.

Here I must refer to a childhood's friend,

Dick Tipton ; who resides at Wallasey. His father and mother were early residents in Birkenhead ; and lived in a large brick house in Church Street, close to St. Mary's Church. They were neighbours and great friends of ours in the early days. Dick Tipton is about my age ; and has always loved the sea and steamboats. He and I have had many short sea trips together to Queenstown ; mostly trial trips of new steamers. His father, brothers, and sisters formed a singularly handsome family. All the girls had beautiful pink and white complexions ; and died early in life. Dick has for many years been connected with the old Liverpool Tug Co. ; and is never so happy as when on board one of his tugs at sea ; smoking his cigar ; and quietly sipping his grog. He is a fine old sea-dog.

I well remember one trip to Queenstown in the *Alaska* with Dick Tipton and our dear old common friend, Stephen Guion ; as good, honest, and straightforward a man as ever walked the Liverpool flags. Stephen Guion was a noble man ; and a perfect gentleman. I knew him intimately for thirty years. He died, I am confident, of a *broken heart*. All honour to his memory !

Well! when the *Alaska* arrived off Roches Point, it blew a gale from the west with a rough sea. We hung off for four hours until daylight; and then proceeded up the harbour; where the steamer had to await the mails. *We* went ashore to an hotel; and as it was Sunday morning Dick proposed that he and I should go to church. Stephen Guion was going on to New York in the *Alaska*. We had only been in church about half an hour, when, greatly to the alarm of the congregation, one of the windows blew in. Dick whispered to me: "Harry, let us go out now. I have had quite enough of this; and am hungry. We will go back to the hotel; and have some mutton chops, and potatoes boiled in their jackets." Dick is nothing if not original. He is a dear, good, old fellow; and I hope may live for many years to come. The last time I met him, he said: "Harry, I have been sporting a set of false teeth; but they are such a nuisance I carry them in my waistcoat pocket;" and from there, sure enough, he produced them!



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CHAPTER XXVI.

The *Princess Royal*—Loss of the *Orion*—Captain Henderson—Shipbuilding in Liverpool—Thomas Wilson—The *Prince* and the *Princess*—The *Urgent*—The *Royal William*—The *Iron Duke*—Mr. Brownrigg—The *Bentinck* and the *Hindustan*—The *William Fawcett*—The *Himalaya*—Transition in Business Methods—A Fine River Spectacle—The *Marco Polo*—T. M. Mackay—The *Schomberg*—Hugh Lyle Smythe—The Collins Line—Loss of the *Arctic*—An Extraordinary Coincidence.

IN the early days of paddle-steamers, running between Liverpool and Glasgow, there was great opposition. One of the finest steamers of her day, for channel purposes, was the *Princess Royal*; a beautiful model; of great speed; a fine sea-boat; luxuriously fitted up for passengers; and a great success on the station for some years. She was ultimately lost; but all on board were saved.

Another fine vessel was built on the Clyde, called the *Orion*. One fine summer's night she left Liverpool, under the command of Captain

Henderson, with a large number of passengers for Glasgow. When off the coast of Kirkcudbright, she struck on a rock. It was quite calm ; and a fine moonlight night ; but the impact was such that the ill-fated vessel went down in a very few minutes. One hundred and fifty out of two hundred and ten passengers were drowned. Indeed, it was marvellous that any were saved. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Gladstone, with a nurse and two children, were on board. Only the father and the mother were saved. Lawrence Gladstone was never seen to smile again : his wife survived him many years ; but she could never forget that fearful accident. Captain Henderson was subsequently tried in the Scotch Courts ; and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Considerable sympathy was felt for him in Glasgow ; where he was well known ; and a subscription was raised to enable him to enter into business on his own account at the expiration of his sentence. Whilst in prison, Captain Henderson drew up a scheme for placing a direct line of first-class steamers on the station between Glasgow and New York. At that time, the proposal was a novelty. Some of the leading Glasgow merchants warmly supported the project ;

a fine steamer was ordered ; and in due course she began to run between Glasgow and New York. Thus was laid the foundation of the great Anchor Line of steamers ; which now trades all over the world ! Here we see prosperity the direct outcome of what at first sight must have appeared irreparable misfortune.

Shipbuilding in Liverpool was once a great industry, which employed large numbers of men ; but dock extension has now practically annihilated the Liverpool shipbuilding yards.

In my boyhood, the leading shipbuilder in Liverpool was Thomas Wilson ; whose yard was at the north end of the town. He built some of the finest steamers and sailing-ships in the world ; and for many years carried on a most successful trade. His models were perfect ; and the work he did for the P. & O. Co., City of Dublin Co., and other large shipowners, was unsurpassed. The *Prince* and the *Princess* were beautiful vessels and fine sea-boats ; built by Wilson for the City of Dublin Co.'s trade between Liverpool and Dublin. These two, and the *Urgent* carried the night mails for many years. Then there was the *Royal William* ; wood and coppered ; side-lever

engines ; famous for her Atlantic passage. I remember seeing her start on her first voyage.

The City of Dublin Co., determined to possess the fastest channel steamer, ordered from Thomas Wilson a beautiful boat, called the *Iron Duke* ; built of the best quality of iron ; and engined by Fawcett & Preston. Her engines were on the side-lever principle ; built almost entirely of wrought-iron and polished entablature. They were the first engines of the kind ever turned out. The *Iron Duke* was a great success. Whenever opportunity served, she raced with the *Princess Royal* ; and most exciting it was. The *Iron Duke* had a slight advantage ; but for the most part there was little in it. I used to have much enjoyment whenever I was on board. The *Iron Duke* was in the registered service of the Company for over forty years ; and was only broken up a few years ago. She was so well-built that she was kept in the Great Float as a reserve boat ; and carried with safety and despatch large cargoes of cattle and goods when obsolete for the passenger traffic. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Fawcett were very proud of this wonderful boat. Captain Bell, the Liverpool superintendent, used

to say he thought the old *Iron Duke* would last for ever.

One of the best known and appreciated men in his day was old Brownrigg; for over half a century closely identified with the City of Dublin Steamship Co. Mr. Brownrigg was fond of all kinds of aquatic sports: yachting and rowing were his especial favourites. He took a great interest in the Crusader Rowing Club. Mr. Brownrigg has always been an esteemed friend of mine; and I have ever had a warm feeling of affection for him. He is an octogenarian; but hearty and well. I sincerely trust he may yet be spared for many years to move in his unostentatious sphere.

Some of Thomas Wilson's wooden paddle ocean-going steamers were beautiful models. I remember the two splendid vessels built in the late 'thirties for the P. & O. Co.; who were then just beginning their remarkable career. At that time, the *Bentinck* and the *Hindostan* were really show ships. People came from all parts to see them. They ran for many years. The Company began with small steamers. One of the first was a little paddle-boat, called the *William Fawcett*; a

painting of which may be seen in the Company's offices in London ; and a very primitive-looking craft she is. The *William Fawcett* did her work ; but who could have foreseen that that little wooden boat, with her long slender funnel, two masts, rigging, and sails, would, in the course of sixty years, be followed by some of the largest and most magnificent steamships in the world ; which carry mails, passengers, and cargo with speed, safety, and punctuality. Complaints from passengers are rarely heard on the P. & O. boats.

The *Himalaya*, one of the finest ocean-going steamers driven with one screw, was built in the 'fifties by J. C. Mare, the celebrated shipbuilder of Blackwall ; who also built the *Prince* and the *Golden Fleece*, vessels of the same class. At the time of the Crimean War, the *Himalaya* came to Liverpool ; and took on board an unprecedented number of troops ; the Scots Greys, soldiers and horses. For a troopship, she was splendidly fitted up. I went on board with my young sons ; and her appearance was both interesting and novel. We watched the *Himalaya* sail ; and sadly thought how few of her passengers would return ; as things were in a terrible state in the Crimea.

During the ensuing winter, nearly all the horses died with cold and starvation at Balaclava. It was said they were in such a frightful state of hunger that they ate each other's tails. The less said about the commissariat the better. It has been recorded over and over again to the eternal condemnation of those who had the management. The *Himalaya*, after many successful voyages to the East, was sold by the P. & O. Co. to our Government; and ran for many years as a successful transport; but, for a trading company, her consumption of coal was far beyond what it should be to run her at a profit.

Liverpool underwent many changes, commercial and financial, from the end of the 'forties to the 'sixties. The rapid increase in the steam trade; the emigration epoch; and the new telegraphic communication; these revolutionised business altogether. Sailing vessels began to be looked upon as things of the past; though many fine four-masted sailers were subsequently built for the eastern trade and California.

One of the finest sights ever witnessed on the Mersey was in 1857; when a small army was shipped away to India owing to the Mutiny.

Some of the largest and most magnificent sailing-ships in the world were chartered by the Government to carry troops and stores with all possible speed. Chief among them, were the *James Baines*, the *Lightning*, the *Champion of the Seas*, the *Marco Polo*, and the *White Star*. Such a sight has never been seen since.

The *Marco Polo* was perhaps the most remarkable sailing-vessel of her time. She was colonial-built for a cargo boat ; and purchased by James Baines & Co. for their Australian trade. Her commander, Captain Forbes, was a well-known shipmaster ; and a wonderful navigator. Her voyage to Melbourne and back to Liverpool was made in about five months. When she sailed up the Mersey on her return voyage, the public could hardly believe she had really been to Australia and back. After doing splendid service, she was eventually lost.

T. M. Mackay, one of our most straightforward Liverpool shipowners, was the active owner and manager of the Black Ball Australian Line ; assisted by James Baines and Joseph Greaves, his well-known partners. The emigrant trade to Australia was an enormous one in the early days.

The gold discoveries in 1852 attracted thousands ; and the Government opened depôts ; and chartered numbers of sailing-vessels. One large depôt was opened at the Birkenhead Docks ; and another in Liverpool. One of the handsomest models, the strongest built, and the most magnificently furnished sailing-ships which ever came into the Mersey was the *Schomberg* ; built for James Baines & Co. She made some rapid runs to Melbourne in the passenger service ; but was ultimately lost. She was not unlike one of our handsome frigates in appearance.

T. M. Mackay was a great friend of mine. He loved horses and hunting ; and used to ride to hounds whenever he could spare the time. He rode well ; was a thorough good sportsman ; and a most lovable man to boot. His eldest daughter was a very superior woman. She married one of our Liverpool merchant princes, Hugh Lyle Smythe, of Barrowmore Hall, Cheshire. He is an old hunting-friend of mine ; a thorough sportsman ; and a well-known forward rider with the Cheshire hounds. Mr. Smythe is a staunch preserver of foxes ; and second to none in dispensing liberal hospitality. One of

his daughters is a fine horsewoman ; always well up with the hounds. That this delightful family may yet spend many happy years together is my fervent hope.

Four of the most wonderful paddle-wheel steamships which ever entered the Mersey belonged to an American company, called the Collins Line. The *Atlantic*, the *Baltic*, the *Pacific*, and the *Arctic*, were paddle-boats with straight up and down stems ; the first of that type I remember being built. All other vessels up to then had been modelled with overhanging stem and figurehead. The Collins steamships were constructed of wood ; built in New York ; and fitted with what were known as steeple-engines ; a type much approved of in America ; but not popular amongst British engineers. These paddle-steamers were fitted up most luxuriously ; and caused quite a sensation. Among other interesting features, they were the first steamers to contain a barber's shop. The Collins Line, however, proved a disastrous speculation ; and all the vessels were in a short time either lost or broken up. The *Pacific* sailed from New York to Liverpool with a large number of



THE S.S. ARCTIC.—Page 315.

passengers on board ; and was never heard of again. She was under the command of Captain Eldridge ; an American, who for some time previously had safely navigated a New York sailing-ship. He was a fine, handsome fellow ; and a thorough seaman.

The Collins vessels had very large paddle-boxes ; the tops of which were practically life-boats ; it being thought that, should occasion require, these could easily be moved and launched. The construction was most ingenious ; and in the case of the *Arctic*, which was run down by a small French steamer, the *Vesta*, off Cape Race, this novel lifeboat was the means of saving a number of lives. The commander of the *Arctic*, Captain Luce, was standing on the paddle-box with his little son in his arms when the *Arctic* sank. As the vessel was engulfed, the great pressure of water under the box forced the upper portion from its fastenings ; and, although taken under the water, it quickly rose to the surface ; and Captain Luce was saved ; but his poor little son was struck by a mass of floating débris, and crushed to death. At the time the *Arctic* was wrecked, Mr. Collins, the founder of

the line, was on a visit to Birkenhead; and the morning after the fatal day, he told a friend that he had had a terribly realistic dream; in which he saw, as in a vision, the *Arctic* sinking; and his wife and daughter going down in her, calling upon and imploring him for help. The vividness of the dream quite unnerved Mr. Collins; but when, a few days after, the sad story of the loss of the *Arctic* came to hand, he was perfectly overwhelmed; not only at his loss; but at the extraordinary coincidence. Truly, "there are more things in this world than are dreamt of in our philosophy!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Burning of the *Ocean Monarch*—The *Queen of the Ocean* to the Rescue—Thomas Littledale—The *Sarah Sands*—The *Great Britain*—Loss of the *Royal Charter*—Admiral Chappell's Letter—A Conclusive Admiralty Experiment—The *Arabia*—The *Scotia*—Captain Judkins—The *Great Eastern*—Mr. Kirkcaldy and Charles MacIver—The *Russia*—John Fowler—Sir Donald Currie.

THE *Ocean Monarch* catastrophe was one of the most distressing sea accidents that ever afflicted Liverpool. The noble ship left the Mersey with a large number of emigrants on board. All went well for a few hours ; when the alarm of fire was raised ; and in a very short time, the *Ocean Monarch* was blazing from stem to stern. Happily, she was driven into Abergele Bay ; where Thomas Littledale's yacht, the *Queen of the Ocean*, was cruising. He immediately sent out all his boats ; but it was with great difficulty that they got alongside the burning ship. Many lives were saved ; but the loss of life was still very

great. Liverpool showed her appreciation of Thomas Littledale's conduct by making him Mayor; and Chairman of the Dock Board. I knew him and his family very well. He was an exceptionally nice man; but was unfortunately taken away almost before the prime of life.

A leading house of Liverpool shipowners was Sands, Turner, & Co.; a highly respectable firm in the American trade. They owned one of the first and largest screw-steamers, called the *Sarah Sands*; named after the wife of the senior partner. When the vessel arrived in Liverpool, thousands of people visited her. She was wonderfully successful in her day; but was finally lost. One year, Mr. Sands was Mayor of Liverpool; and his partner, Charles Turner, was Chairman of the Dock Board, and M.P. for one of the county divisions.

Gibbs, Bright, & Co. were leading shipowners in Liverpool and London. They were largely engaged in the East and Australian trades. Tyndal Bright died only recently. He was a personal friend of mine; and very fond of shooting, fishing, and other sports. Gibbs, Bright, & Co. had a celebrated ship, called the *Great*

Britain. She was built at Bristol, by Paterson, with auxiliary engines and screw propeller; and was at first intended for the Atlantic trade; but subsequently made some quick passages to Melbourne. Her career was a remarkable one. Soon after she was built, she sailed from Liverpool with a number of passengers, under the command of Lieutenant Hoskins, R.N.; and ran almost in a direct course straight into Dundrum Bay on the coast of Ireland; where she stuck high and dry; and was for many months ashore on the beach. The machinery, very heavy, as all machinery was in those days, was taken out of her as she lay; and brought over to Liverpool. I saw it landed. Meanwhile, new engines were made by Penn & Sons, of Greenwich; of the nominal power of 500 horses. These were fitted into her; and eventually she was got off; and came to Liverpool; made good voyages with full complements of passengers and cargo; but did not pay; and was finally converted into a sailing-ship. Her hull was in such a state that Gibbs, Bright, & Co. decided to sheathe her with planking; and very handsome she looked; but, from first to last, I fear she proved a most unprofitable speculation.

She was finally lost ; loaded with coal. One captain of the *Great Britain* disappeared at sea one night ; and was never heard of again !

One of the largest iron steamers in her day, the *Royal Charter*, was built at Chester, and fitted with auxiliary power. She was intended for the Australian trade ; and was a fine-looking ship. The *Royal Charter* was fitted with good machinery ; successfully launched ; and was favourably looked upon as another link in the chain of shipbuilding development. However, all hopes were doomed to early disappointment. On her voyage home from Melbourne, with a large number of passengers and a valuable cargo and specie on board, she made a rapid passage under the brightest auspices until she reached the neighbourhood of Holyhead ; when a very violent gale suddenly sprang up. The captain wished to run into Holyhead ; but many on board urged him to try to make Liverpool before night. The ship passed Holyhead ; but the gale increased to a hurricane ; and the position was soon desperate. The sea ran high ; and the power on board the *Royal Charter* was much too small for her to attempt to run out to sea ; her most

hopeful chance of safety. The captain believed that if he could only run into one of the little bays between Puffin Island and the Skerries, the *Royal Charter* might find shelter. It was impossible to run back to Holyhead ; for her engines could not have driven the ship. On reaching what was considered a place of safety, there was a sudden change in the wind ; and the captain was compelled to let go both anchors. At the same time, he got the ship's head to the wind ; and kept his engines going. This proved to be a mistake. If the captain had let go only one anchor ; and trusted to it ; the opinion of many experienced men was that the ship might have weathered the storm ; for, with her chains and anchor of the finest quality of iron, one anchor might have held her firmly ; but the movement of the engines caused a jerking of the cables ; which parted under the unequal strain ; and the *Royal Charter* was driven on the rocks ; and became a total wreck. A frightful scene ensued ; and some hundreds were drowned. This was one of the saddest shipwrecks I ever remember. Some friends and I were hunting in Cheshire ; and on arriving at Chester Station we

were told of the terrible catastrophe ; which naturally aroused considerable excitement where the vessel was built.

The following interesting letter I received from Admiral Chappell when I was an apprentice at Fawcett & Preston's, Liverpool :—

“LONDON, *March 2nd*, 1843.

“MY DEAR HARRY,—Many thanks for your account of the screw-ship preparing at Liverpool. I am sure you will be satisfied to learn that it was shown to the chairman of the Screw Company, and a copy sent to the Admiralty to prove that there are other parties, as well as their Lordships, who begin to sniff out the advantages of that important adaptation.

“You would oblige me still further, if you can contrive to ascertain the exact form of screw used in your Liverpool vessel, *i.e.* whether it be a single, double, or treble threaded screw.

“My daughter is still enjoying the gaieties of Cheltenham, or I am sure she would unite with Captain Wood and myself in kindest regards to all your family. Pray also present my respects to Mr. Fawcett and Mr. Willink.

"Ask Sophy if she has arranged a rich widow for me yet.—Yours truly,

"E. CHAPPELL."

The Admiralty Board is notoriously slow in giving up the obsolete for the modern. The value of the new application of the principle of the Archimedean screw was continually pressed; and the Board urged to adopt the invention; not only in our warships; but also in the Government tug-boats. At last, the Admiralty gave way; and agreed to experiment. Two vessels were built of equal size, tonnage, etc.; twin ships in every respect, with the exception that one was fitted with an Archimedean screw-propeller; the other, with a paddle-wheel power. When all was ready, the two vessels were fastened together, stern to stern, with strong hawsers. This done; the captain of each vessel gradually put on full steam. Result—the screw-steamer simply sailed away; and dragged with ease the paddle-steamer after her. This practical and conclusive trial convinced even the Admiralty.

The *Arabia* paddle-steamer, built of wood and coppered, to the order of Charles MacIver, was

a powerful vessel ; at the time, the largest and swiftest steamer in the Transatlantic service. She made some remarkable passages ; fitted with the old side-lever engines ; and was a great favourite with passengers.

The leading shipbuilders and engineers were absorbed in trying to solve the problem of crossing the Atlantic, by steam power, with safety and speed. At this time, the screw-propeller was hardly thought of for the purpose.

The last Atlantic steamer with paddles was the *Scotia* ; built in Glasgow for Charles MacIver. She was commanded by one of the ablest seamen of his day, Captain Judkins. It used to be said that every wave in the Atlantic knew him ; and bowed their heads at his approach. The voyages of the *Scotia* were calculated to a day ; almost to an hour. The grand old captain once made a wager that he would dine with a party of friends at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, at 7 P.M. on the day he was timed to arrive in the Mersey. As the clock struck seven, in walked the captain ; even before some of the local guests had arrived. Captain Judkins was a personal friend of mine ; and used to visit me at Claughton Hill. Once,

he delighted my youngsters by arriving with a beautiful American rocking-horse ; which worked on springs ; a really handsome present. It was so well made that my grandchildren have ridden upon it.

Captain Judkins was much irritated at times by passengers' absurd questions. One day, an elderly person met the captain on deck during a thick fog ; which had prevailed for three or four days. " Beg pardon, captain, but may I ask if there is always a fog here ? " " How the devil do I know ; " he replied, " I don't live here ! "

What changes I have seen in ships to be sure ! We are on the eve of immense tonnage ; even surpassing the 22,000 tons of the *Great Eastern* ; so foolishly broken up in recent years on the shores of the Mersey. What a career she had from the day the great Brunel designed her ! From first to last, she cost over one million sterling ; was finally sold for about £17,000 ; and took three years to break up. I called it murder. Had she only been gutted of her machinery ; and her paddle-boxes removed ; the *Great Eastern*, refitted with a 30,000 indicated horsepower with twin-screws, might now have been

running between Liverpool and New York ; the largest, strongest, and safest ; not to say the fastest ocean ferry-boat afloat.

When Mr. Kirkcaldy, the wonderful inventor of such tension machinery as may be seen at Southwark, was draughtsman with the eminent Robert Napier, of Glasgow, he drew a sectional plan of that beautiful vessel, the *Persia* ; which was built on the Clyde for Charles MacIver. Whilst working on the drawing, Charles MacIver called ; and looked over Mr. Kirkcaldy's shoulder. Kirkcaldy was a quiet, unassuming young man ; but he ventured to suggest to Charles MacIver that in his next steamer the screw be substituted for paddle-wheels? Charles MacIver stamped his foot on the floor as though a bomb had exploded. "How dare you, Mr. Kirkcaldy, name a screw to me for crossing the Atlantic?" However, the *Scotia* was the last paddle-wheel steamer. The *Russia* screw-steamer followed ; and a great success she was. A few years passed away, and the screw developed into twins ; now almost universally adopted with marvellous results. The great Cunard Company's wonderful liners have astonished the world with their

extraordinary safety and comfort in crossing the Atlantic ; no matter what the season ; or however rough the seas. Charles MacIver had John Fowler to manage his Atlantic service ; and Donald Currie the Mediterranean business. John Fowler died many years ago ; before he was old. The world knows all about Donald Currie. He is now growing old ; but is beloved and respected. Sir Donald Currie is an old and an esteemed friend of mine ; and, when in London, I much enjoy a talk of Auld Lang Syne. I sincerely trust he may enjoy his health for many years to come.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Author and William Inman—The *City of Rome*—T. H. Ismay—Trial Trip of the *City of Chester*—Banquet to the Naval Architects—Henry West—Cecil Holden—The Mersey Dock Estate—G. F. Lyster—The Pontoon Floating - Bridge for Heavy Traffic—The Bar—Sand-Pumping Dredgers—John Brancker—Southampton as an Incentive to Liverpool's Progress as a Port—The Greater Liverpool of the Future.

ONE morning, whilst crossing the river with William Inman, he asked me to accompany him to his office ; where I was much struck with a beautiful model of a steamship which had just arrived from Barrow. This was the *City of Rome* ; the handsomest steamship afloat. She had overhanging bow with figurehead ; and her lines were perfect. William Inman was largely responsible for the modelling of the vessel ; ably assisted by Mr. John, the manager of the Barrow Shipbuilding Co. The *City of Rome* was a single-screw steamer. One leading feature in the construction of her engines was the propeller

shaft ; which was made of steel by Whitworths, of Manchester. The shaft was hollow ; and bolted together in three pieces or segments. It was a perfect job ; and I do not see how it is possible for the shaft to fracture, its construction is so wonderfully arranged.

One day, I met my friend, T. H. Ismay, on the upper deck of a Woodside ferry-boat ; and in course of conversation I remarked : “ Which do you consider the handsomest ship afloat ? ” “ Oh,” he said, “ that one,” pointing to the *City of Rome*, which was lying at anchor in mid-stream ; “ she is a perfect model ; and sits like a duck on the water.” I have heard, however, that she was not a very profitable ship to work.

When the *City of Chester* was built, William Inman sent me an invitation to go with him on her trial trip. There was a large party on board ; which included several noblemen and Scotch lairds, with pipers. The official trial was most successful. On parting, William Inman said : “ Well, Aspinall ; I hope you have enjoyed the trip.” I replied ; “ Never more gratified. I have done what few on board could manage. I have eaten seven substantial meals of best

quality in twenty-four hours ; besides drinking good liquor *ad lib.*" Certainly, the entertainment was most *recherché* and abundant.

My old friend, Captain Kennedy, was in command of the *City of Chester*. He afterwards commanded the *City of Rome*. Alas ! like many other old personal friends he is gone.

Talking about banquets on board steamships, I must name one on board the White Star steamer, *Germanic*, a few years ago ; to which I was invited by Thomas H. Ismay, to meet the Naval Architects ; who were holding their Annual Conference in Liverpool. I have been present at many AN entertainments in London, Liverpool, Southampton, Glasgow, etc. ; but never to one more excellent in every way. The White Star Line, though, has always excelled in the victualling department.

Henry West is an old resident in Birkenhead ; and well known, not only in Liverpool, but I may say in almost every seaport town in the United Kingdom. I have often heard in shipping circles that reports on ships with the name of Henry West appended are always most reliable. On the visit to the Mersey of the Naval Architects,

Mr. West had entire charge of the arrangements ; and most creditably managed the whole affair.

Cecil Holden, the Birkenhead Coroner, was long looked upon by his friends and neighbours as a man of promise ; likely to play a prominent part in township affairs. However, his appointment as Coroner definitely circumscribed his energies. The Coronership is without question a position of dignity and honour ; though it was thought that Mr. Holden, as a free-lance, had in him the potentiality of greater things. Cecil Holden is a most active man ; and perhaps one of the finest amateur cricketers in the county.

Few, not immediately connected with the Mersey Dock Estate, have a full appreciation of its vast extent. The beautiful machinery and appliances are mostly the work of G. F. Lyster, the Dock Engineer ; in his time one of the first engineering authorities in the kingdom. His son, A. George Lyster, the present Dock Engineer, is right worthy to fill his father's shoes. G. F. Lyster has himself taken the trouble to pilot me over the entire property ; and the more I see of it the more wonderful it appears. The Mersey Docks are the finest in the world.

The cross-river traffic between Birkenhead and Liverpool increased to such an extent that it was considered necessary to construct a cart and carriage-way from the Liverpool approaches to the Pier Head. After various plans had been submitted to the authorities, it was decided to do away with the George's Basin ; and to stop up the passage or ship-canal lock between the basin and the Prince's Dock on the north side ; and the basin and the George's Dock on the south side. This alteration was made to provide an uninterrupted road from the Pier Head to the great thoroughfares leading from the Dock Estate to the city. In conjunction therewith, G. F. Lyster submitted a scheme for providing a permanent pontoon floating structure ; the levels and grades of which would rise and fall with the tides. His plans were adopted ; and the bridge is a striking monument to the genius of the great Dock Engineer.

For many years, the channel approaches to the river Mersey occupied much attention ; as the main entrances were constantly shifting ; owing to the extraordinary accumulations and movements of the sandbanks. One great obstacle which

accumulated was called the bar ; and how to deal with this, for a long period nonplussed some of the cleverest engineers. G. F. Lyster was for many years averse from touching the bar ; in fact, I have heard him say that he always feared even more serious obstacles and accumulations might be formed if the tidal course were in any way interfered with. The problem has been much simplified in recent years ; owing to the introduction of the marvellous sand-pumping dredgers ; which are now constantly at work. These have greatly reduced the bar ; and bid fair to remove it altogether. The largest steamers now pass in and out of the port at all states of the tide. Let us hope that the improvement made may be permanent ; as it is highly important in the interests of the country that the trade of the Mersey and the safety of the great Trust, which amounts to so many millions, should be in such a perfect state that not even a shadow of a doubt may exist.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, from the time of its formation, has always had the advice and assistance of some of the best and most energetic business men in Liverpool. One

noted citizen, for several years Chairman of the Board, has just passed away ; full of years ; and loved and respected by all. John Brancker was a member of a leading mercantile firm ; and his character as a business man is well summed up by his familiar cognomen on 'Change : " Honest John." The Branckers are among the oldest families in Liverpool.

During the past few years, the progress of Liverpool has been greatly stimulated by the wonderful development of Southampton ; for the southern port has come rapidly to the front, ever since the Southampton Docks were purchased by the London and South-Western Railway Company ; who are working their system for all it is worth.

For many years, I have been increasingly dissatisfied with the retarded progress of Birkenhead. The true interests of the great communities on each side of the Mersey are really identical ; and yet the antagonism of rival municipal authorities inevitably checks every promising development. Were I a public man to-day, I should determinedly and perseveringly urge Liverpool to cross over the noble river (the source

of all its wealth), which separates Lancashire Liverpool from Cheshire Birkenhead ; to absorb Birkenhead, Wallasey, and the other growing communities on the Cheshire banks of the Mersey ; and to weld them with itself into one homogeneous city, governed by one powerful, centralised authority. So far as the maritime arrangements are concerned, the docks on both sides of the river are already under one control ; that of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board ; but, owing to the over-representation of Lancashire interests, the Liverpool Docks are developed to, and maintained at, a higher point of efficiency than are the magnificent docks on the Cheshire side. Were Birkenhead Corporation and the Wallasey Local Board merged in a greater Liverpool authority, the antagonism so detrimental to the progress of the Cheshire side would disappear ; and we should have a seaport unrivalled anywhere throughout the world. Nothing short of unification and centralisation will enable developments to keep well abreast of the needs of the vast and growing communities on each side of the Mersey. Communication between the two shores has received a great impetus owing to the recent

electrification of the Mersey Tunnel property ; *which should be municipalised as soon as practicable*. Communication, however, cannot be regarded as satisfactorily complete, until we have a free subway under the Mersey ; and the river is adequately spanned by suitable bridges. Although I saw, over a quarter of a century ago, elaborate plans and drawings of proposed suspension bridges, the *status quo*, singular to say, is still maintained. For men of insight and forethought concerned for the well-being of the locality, the time is now ripe to put forth serious efforts to carry into effect a comprehensive scheme of unification, such as will place the Mersey port well in the vanguard of the age.

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